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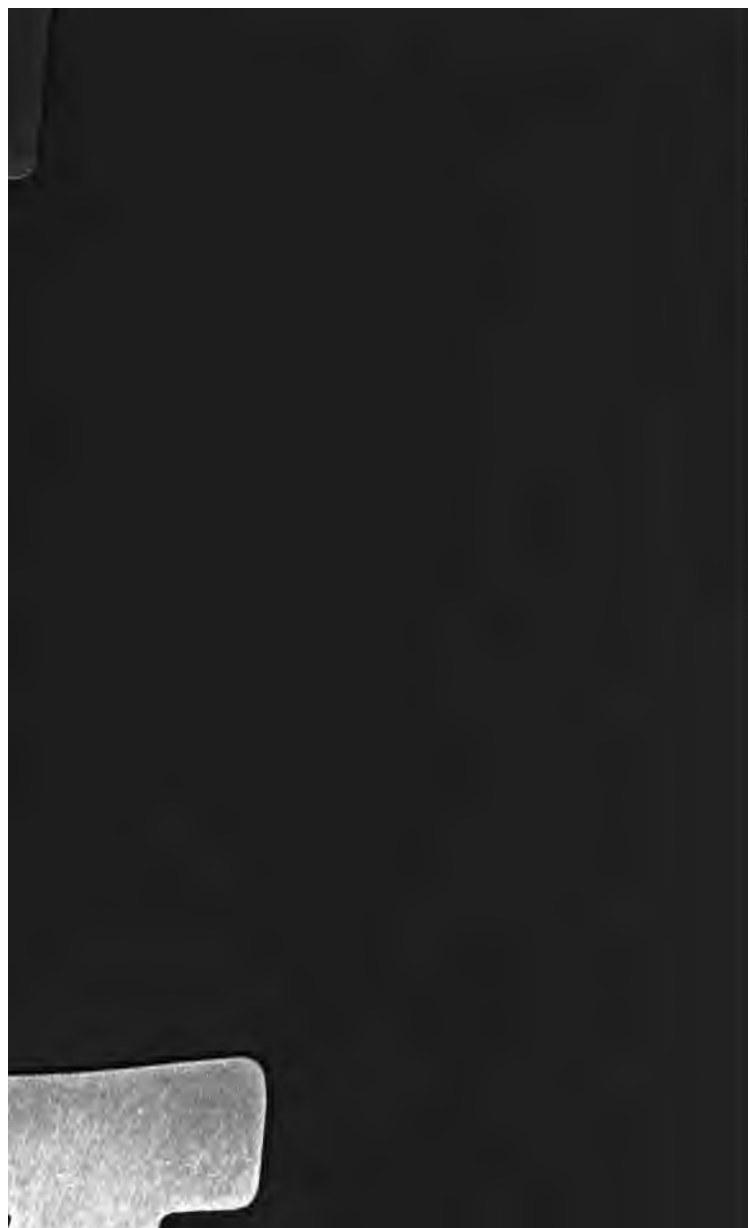
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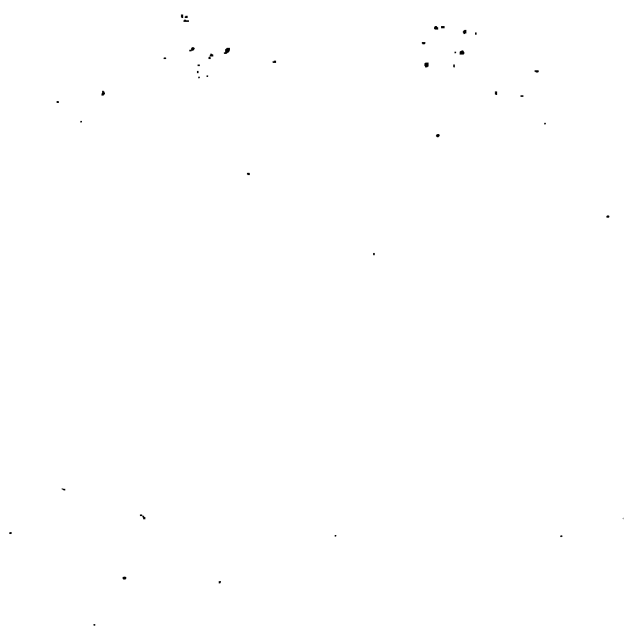






THE
BROKEN WALLS OF JERUSALEM
AND
THE REBUILDING OF THEM.

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THE CAPTIVES.

THE
BROKEN WALLS OF JERUSALEM

AND
THE REBUILDING OF THEM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF
THE WIDE WIDE WORLD



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JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET
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THE BROKEN WALLS.

CHAPTER I.

LEAVING HOME.

It was Sunday evening on the Mount of Olives. We came together after dinner, as usual, with our Bibles ; then sat waiting, uncertain with what we should begin. Calm and sweet the light lay on the city and on the valley sides ; it glittered on the Mosque of Omar and began to flush the hills of Moab. Those hills which were witnesses !

“What are we going to do now ?” Liph broke the silence. “We have made an end of the Kingdom of Judah !”

“Mind,” said my uncle, “it was truly the end of the kingdom.”

“Why, sir, I thought the people came back, some of them, after a while.”

“The people, some of them, yes ; but the kingdom never. There was no more kingdom of Judah, or of Israel, till He came whose right it is ; and He has not yet openly assumed the dominion. The Theocracy as it had been was restored no more. From that time on, Judah was under the rule of whatever world-power happened to be dominant ; with the exception of one short interval of independence in the time of the Maccabees. So that the destruction and fall which the prophets foretold covered one long stretch of

years, from the time of Nebuchadnezzar to the present day; and the deliverance by Christ is truly the next thing, in reality, as in their visions. The return from the Captivity was simply an earnest and a pledge and a faint image of that deliverance."

"O Uncle Sam! tell us about the return. Let us read Ezra and Nehemiah."

"You do not know about the Captivity yet. Suppose we read Daniel and Esther."

"Oh, delightful!" I cried. "I forgot all about Daniel and Esther."

"I don't believe you knew much to forget," Liph said.

"Polite," said Uncle Sam. "But probably true."

"Then will you, Uncle Sam? And where shall we begin?"

"Begin with the departure of the captives whom Nebuzaradan carried away after the destruction of the city."

"What can you tell about them? The Bible does not say."

"Something it says. See Jeremiah xl. 1. They probably had been sent to Ramah and detained there while Nebuzaradan finished his work of destroying the Temple and the principal houses, and throwing down the walls of Jerusalem. It seems that in the first confusion they had all, Jeremiah and the rest, been put in chains and taken out of the way. You know where Ramah was; Ramah of Benjamin; the Ramah that Baasha fortified; up yonder, some five or six miles to the north, on the top of that high hill. We went to visit it. From Ramah the captive Jews could look over here and see only too well what was doing at their old home. They could watch the flare of the flames, and afterwards the clouds and columns of smoke that rose from the burning places; and they could imagine all the rest. And what it was for a Jew to see and imagine, I suppose you and I can have no fair notion. It is bad enough for a man of any country to see such a sight; and a Jew's national feeling, and pride of race, and pride of history, and pride of hope, *exceeds in the grip of its intensity* all that a man of another

nation is capable of. Bitter beyond all that we can imagine was the sight, and their own situation to that company of men and women who in chains looked back from Ramah, and saw the fire burn Jerusalem. Her that had been "beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, the city of the Great King." Her "towers" and her "bulwarks" and her "palaces" had been a thing to see. The "voice that was heard in Ramah" long after, when Rachel again was weeping for her children, "because they were not,"—could hardly equal in bitterness the cry of heart that went up from the old place while the captives waited there."

"Did Jeremiah mean *that* weeping? or which of them did he mean?"

"You may say he meant both. Rachel weeping for her children is a bold figure, expressing the imaginary grief of the mother of Israel in the loss of the sons of Israel. It is spoken of the captivity of Ephraim, or the ten tribes, in the very first place."

"Then I do *not* see," exclaimed Liph, "how it touches the murder of the babies at all."

"It is explained in this way. The sin which drove the captives away to Assyria and Babylon, was the remote cause of all the disasters that came after; of the subjection of the people under a foreign power, and so of Herod's reign, who slew the children to maintain his crown. Those words of Jeremiah found their fulfilment over and over again in the course of history."

"I don't think it is easy to understand. Well, now, let us go on with the history of the captives. You said they were in chains?"

"Chains on their wrists. There was but a little company of them, compared with the thousands who had gone ten years before with Jehoiachin; not a thousand all counted, of men; but you must add their families, and that brings the number up. These appear all to have been taken away from Jerusalem, both the ten thousand ten years before, and these hundreds now. The numbers carried away out-

of the country are not stated here ; they have been reckoned at three hundred thousand, or four hundred thousand. We follow the company that Nebuzaradan took away from Jerusalem.

"They went, when Jerusalem was reduced to a burning heap, they went the great northern road. You know it as far as the great plain. Many of them no doubt had never travelled even so far ; and the curiosity they felt about places, and the pain with which they would hear every familiar name as they passed, or camped for the night, we can imagine to have gone hand in hand. Everywhere they met testimonies to their own folly and to the truth of God's warnings. Bethel, where Jeroboam had made Israel to sin, and Josiah had burned bones, lying desolate and lonely. Shiloh, where the tabernacle had stood in earlier prosperous times, when the Lord was with His people, and they were triumphantly victorious ; whither the tribes went up to worship ; now lying alone in the sunlight. For it was in the dry and warm end of summer or beginning of autumn that the journey was made ; and never a cloud comes to soften the glare. Bethel and Shiloh are not both on the high road, I know, Liph ; but the situation would be pointed out ; and different companies might well take different paths for the sake of better speed. They would be all together, at any rate, in the plain of Mukhna and passing through the valley of Shechem. Would some of the people remember and mark the two mountains on either hand, where the great solemnity of cursing and blessing had been gone though in the days of Joshua ? Now the people had drawn down the curse on their heads, and it was lying on them. The hills of Ephraim, once so fertile, were left to the beasts of prey. The plains were inhabited by a race of strangers, speaking an unknown tongue, rather a plurality of tongues. People yet too few to keep the ground cultivated and the villages in repair ; a desolate condition of things, good only for the wild creatures which were multiplying in a way to be already *inconvenient* ; terraces going to ruin ; fields neglected ;

this is what the travellers saw as they went over the beautiful hills and valleys. Then they came to Esdraelon ; and the memories of their proud ancient history must have been thick upon them ; yes, and of the sin of Israel. On Tabor, Barak had stood with his ten thousand. At Jezreel, Ahab had built his splendid city. In that valley Gideon had chased the Midianites ; and on Carmel, at the other end of the plain, Elijah had spoken his wonderful words and offered his sacrifice. Many of the captives had never been so far north before ; they saw it all for the first and the last time ; and as they crossed the great plain, hot and dry as we found it, Tiny, and wound round the base of Mount Tabor, or went by the pass below Mount Carmel to the plain of Acre, I think the bitterness of the journey must have been almost as much as their hearts could bear. The shadow of so much glory was there, and the glory was so utterly passed away."

"You do not know which way they went?"

"I do not know, but I guess. There were two ways by which they might have gone. One by the plain of Acre, up past Tyre and Sidon, between the range of Lebanon and the sea-coast ; till they came to the opening in that range through which they could enter the 'land of Hamath'—the northern part of Coele-Syria. But I think, as Nebuchadnezzar was at Riblah, they would have reached him more easily and sooner the other way. Passing round Mount Tabor and so up to the lake of Gennesareth—or crossing the Jordan below the lake and going to the east of it—but in any case coming to Cæsarea Philippi and bending round the base of Mount Hermon, entering so the valley between Lebanon and Anti-lebanon. Up that valley they would have only a straight course to get to Riblah, and a very rich country to go through."

"How long would it take them?"

"The whole journey ? Many days ; long enough to taste slowly all the bitter there was about it. Many days ; for anywhere the travelling of large bodies of men is slow, and in the East it is specially slow. From Jerusalem to Cæsarea

Philippi, as men journey now, on good beasts, takes more than sixty-four hours. From the lower end of the great valley of Coele-syria, where they would enter it after passing Banias, or Cæsarea Philippi, there was a long, long range of some hundred miles of weary travelling. For a while they would be still not out of the region of the Promised land, not yet beyond all that was familiar in name or history. Losing sight of home slowly; and that is hard work. As long as the great range of Lebanon was on one hand, and the head of Hermon with its bands of glittering ice still rose into the sky behind them, they had something to cling to. But as the days passed on, Hermon was further and further off; sometimes hidden from view, as they would suppose, for the last time; and then again the shining head of the mountain would come into view and seem to send a greeting to them. But they lost it at last, and by and by the royal encampment at Riblah appeared in the north.

"The plain is wide and rich there. We may fancy the tents of the Assyrian army lying along the banks of the Orontes, covering a great space every way. In the distance, the two ridges of Lebanon and Anti-lebanon are seen to break down into the plain towards the north-west and towards the north-east. It might have seemed to the exiles that the last familiar landmarks were forsaking them now. They were out of the land of Palestine here, and in the land of Hamath. The end of the one and the beginning of the other is a little below Riblah."

"I guess they did not think much of scenery, Uncle Sam."

"In times of great suffering people do, however, note and feel the points of their surroundings, even though at the time they do not always know they do. They remember them afterwards. It is true that the captive Jews had enough else to think of at Riblah. Here their king had just been judged and condemned and his sentence executed; the king's sons had been put to death, and Zedekiah himself *deprived of sight* and bound in fetters of brass to go to

Babylon. Perhaps the sixty or seventy chief men who were taken from Jerusalem and brought hither, had come at the same time with the exiles ; not sooner ; and in that case *their* execution followed now, before the march was continued. There the captives' fate was settled at any rate ; and from Riblah they presently set forward again, always going northwards. Lebanon was left for ever behind them ; Anti-lebanon sank down into a blue cloud in the distance ; and as Dickens says, 'the sky was empty.' Nobody but an exile knows what it is to be an exile."

"I suppose it was a long journey, the rest of it?"

"It took Ezra and his company four months, from Babylon to Jerusalem."

"Four months! But what a tremendous thing, then, to take armies that way!"

"Quite true. It speaks for absolute power and vast resources. And you see, children, it could not be across the desert where it is broad. Such large bodies of men must follow up along the course of the Euphrates on the one hand, or along the rich valleys of the coast on the other, to the point where the desert narrowed most ; then take a short cut across. Yet trading caravans went by the way of Palmyra to Damascus ; Palmyra being about half way between Damascus and the Euphrates, and one hundred and twenty miles from either of them, with abundant fountains of good water. For armies, nevertheless, that would not do."

"And now every foot of the way was strange."

"Every foot of the way. The great sandy, gravelly desert ; then the great river. *The* river, as the Bible writers style it. Remember, they knew no river in Palestine bigger than the Jordan ; twenty yards broad, perhaps. Now the Euphrates, even where they struck it, is comparatively a flood ; and further down it has a breadth of three hundred and fifty yards. It is a great river, navigable for twelve hundred miles from its mouth."

"How would they get across it?"

"Probably they did not cross it at Bir. If they had, it would have been on rafts made of inflated skins. So

Sennacherib's soldiers used to get across ; and on such a raft a traveller may go nowadays. But most probably the caravan descended the river along its right bank. All strange to them, and much alike on both sides. As far as the refreshing effects of the waters could extend, there would be grass and groves of trees. So it is now in the neighbourhood of Babylon ; so it was then. And as soon as they came far enough south, the groves would be of date palms. A foreign land ! If anything was needed to impress the fact, it would be the broad pointed leaves overhead and the great clusters of strange fruit hanging among them. It was a long journey down by the side of the Euphrates ; probably they took their time, and went only a few miles a day ; and every foot of the way would bring them to something they had never seen before. On the river itself there was a wonderful sort of life and stir of trade and business. Marvellous little, round, wicker boats, like great baskets, were floating down ; they carried Armenian wine in casks ; then there would be rafts, laden with black basalt from the mountains in the north ; stone that Nebuchadnezzar wanted for the adornment of his architecture. For in Babylonia itself there is no stone for any use ; the country is a rich clay soil, which bore wonderful crops and furnished material for unlimited bricks ; but stone, if any were wanted, had to be fetched from a distance. On land the exiles would also see merchant caravans going and coming ; for Babylon was a merchant city, and fetched the materials for her gay and luxurious life out of every known quarter of the world. So as the captives descended along the river, the evidences and signs that they were drawing near one of the great world centres would multiply on every hand and in every form. Getting to the alluvial soil of Babylonia proper, below Hit on the map, they found the country on both sides of the river cut up with canals. A perfect system of canal irrigation, a network of channels, filled the ground between the Euphrates and the Tigris, and carried fertility far on the west side of the river. A stir of busy life, agricultural and *mercantile*, was everywhere to be seen and felt. The golden

clusters of the dates over their heads were only a fair emblem of the bursting riches of the country and people."

"Do they have no rain there?"

"Very little indeed in summer, and not much at any season. They have showers in spring and in winter; but during the summer time they must irrigate their crops. Babylonia depends on its canals."

"Are they there now?"

"A few; and the low mounds which mark where the old ones ran, are all over the country. The mounds, some of them, Mr. Layard says, look like ranges of hills; a few canals still have water in them. Wherever the water comes, there can be palm groves and fertility. Mr. Layard says that even an engineer of our times might admire the Babylonian system of canals. The people availed themselves, he says, of the variations of level in the surface of the country and of the times of the two rivers' rising, in a way that showed great skill and knowledge of surveying and hydraulics. All this was strange to the Jewish captives. And it must have been strange to them to see no vineyards, and to miss the cool green of the olives and the shadow of the fig-trees. Here the tropical palms were almost the only growth; palms and cypresses. I suppose pomegranates and acacias grew then as now along the banks of the streams, and the 'willows;' whatever tree that meant. In Palestine, I believe it generally meant the oleander, which fringes every lake and stream; in Babylon it meant more probably the poplar, which grows along by the water. Tamarisks are there too, but of small size, merely shrub-like. Palm trees, on the contrary, were all over the country. They were carefully cultivated, for they made a large portion of the subsistence of the people."

"Just fruit, Uncle Sam?"

"Why not fruit, as well as potatoes? But the palm gave the people much more than fruit. It was said to have three hundred and sixty uses. The Babylonians got from it 'bread, wine, vinegar, honey, groats, string and ropes of all kinds, firing, and a mash for fattening cattle.'"

"And the fruit is very nice?"

"Delicious; whether fresh or dried; and there are a number of varieties. Besides dates, you know Babylonia was the country of wheat."

"*The country?*"

"There is no other spot of earth where it is known to be a native. And the returns of cultivation in that land were enormous. Herodotus says the blade was often four fingers broad, both of the wheat and barley; and it was necessary to cut it twice and then let cattle feed it down, to prevent the plant from doing what we call 'running to haulm;' and the returns were fifty and a hundred fold, and a hundred and fifty fold; and barley was said even to attain a productiveness of three hundred fold. Other grain was grown too, millet and sesame; and fruits and vegetables of many sorts. Nevertheless the chief food of the people generally was furnished by the date palm."

"What became of their great harvests of grain?"

"They went to make the pockets of the governors and nobles heavy with silver. I speak figuratively, for I do not suppose those nobles wore any pockets. The crops went also to feed the king's army. In somewhat later times, under the Persian rule, all the empire was divided into districts, to each of which was assigned the support of the monarch and of his army during a certain portion of the year. The district of Babylon gave the supply for four months of the twelve."

"Where did the supply for the other eight months come from?"

"The rest of Asia. So also governors of Babylonia found it easy to grow rich. One of them is related to have pocketed two bushels of silver daily."

"Then it is plain that the exiles must have seen a very flourishing country. How is it now?"

"Waste and desolate."

"Could we go there?"

"No. The country is too wild and unsettled, and also *in a very unhealthy state in parts, owing to the marshes.*"

"What makes the marshes?"

"The neglect of the canals. The water of the river failing from some of the channels which it should supply, overflows in other directions. One sees an alternation now of burnt-up lands and malarious marshes. There was neither the one nor the other at the time we are speaking of, but the whole country was a blossoming garden."

"There is one other thing I should think the Jews would miss," said I. "Their hills."

"Without a doubt. It is what an inhabitant of mountainous country always does miss desperately, if he is constrained to abide in a flat land. Babylonia's flatness is unmitigated. The only thing that breaks it now is the lines of mounds where the canal embankments ran, and the heaps of ruin, like small hills, where some great buildings once stood. What broke the dead level of the plain at that day, was the piles of buildings standing in their strength and glory. The ruins can be seen now from a long way off, towering up above the plain; how must it have been when they stood in their perfection and glory! If the learned ones are right, the great tower of Belus, or Bel, would have been one of the first wonders of architecture that struck the eyes of the Jewish captives as they came to Babylon. The ruined mound is one hundred and forty feet high still."

"How high was it then?"

"Nobody knows. One reporter says, over six hundred feet; but not even the great pyramid of Egypt approaches that, so the report is not believed. But it rose in seven great stages, like a series of gigantic steps, growing smaller each one, pyramid shaped. Then the walls of the city themselves were a wonder. They were declared to be three hundred feet high, and eighty feet broad; and they enclosed a space of some sixty miles' circumference."

"I don't know how to believe it."

"It is difficult. I give you the statements of old travellers and historians, which in part confirm each other, and in part are confirmed by the remains."

"Do the walls remain still?"

"No."

"How could they disappear entirely, if they had been like that?"

"They could not, without man's help. We shall come to that by and by, Liph. Just now we are imagining the exiles arriving at Babylon. There can be no doubt about the fact of the walls, though it is not certain that the enormous construction was at that time wholly finished. This was in Nebuchadnezzar's nineteenth year; he was doing, but he could not have done yet all his marvellous works. The river ran through the city. If they had descended the right bank to that point, they crossed the great river probably on the wonderful bridge which spanned the flood on piers of mason-work, and found themselves at the end of their journey."

"I wonder how they felt."

"You need not. We know pretty well. We know that they sat down 'by the rivers of Babylon' and wept there."

"Sir, there was only one river."

"Sir, the waters of that river flowed in a countless number of channels. They were so many rivers to the unaccustomed eyes, or minds, of the Israelites. It seems that their captors, the guards who convoyed this party of colonists, having in the course of months of travelling together become somewhat familiar with them, asked them to sing some of their own country songs, Ps. cxxxvii. The Babylonian people appear to have been fond of music, vocal and instrumental. The psalm tells how the captives felt at the request. From the splendours and novelties of their new abode their hearts turned longingly to their rocky home far away. Dates might be sweet, and water abundant, and life easy in this foreign home; but you can see with what a passionate intensity of longing they turned from it all and looked back to what they had lost. 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget spinning! If I do not remember thee, let my tongue

cleave to the roof of my mouth ; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.' Perhaps their captors had prophesied that they *would* forget and be comforted. Then see the extreme bitterness of the feeling roused in them, as it is shown by the curses upon Israel's enemies ; the Edomites who had helped and exulted in Jerusalem's downfall, and then the Babylonians who had wrought it."

"But, Uncle Sam, that does not sound Christian?"

"They were not Christians who said it."

"But it is in the Bible, in the Psalms?"

"Being there, it contains not the people's or the psalmist's feeling merely, but the Lord's judgment, spoken by the Holy Ghost. Edom was a type of the Church's enemies in all time ; Babylon was a manifestation of the world-power which in all time fights against Christ. To the destruction of that world-power we in these days must look forward with like hope and desire. Nay, children, not desiring vengeance, upon even the evil, except in so far as it is the only means of deliverance for the good. But the Lord, *He* means retribution. He is the Judge, and can award it truly."

"Pray how did they know so certainly that Babylon was to be destroyed?"

"The prophets had told them. We will see by and by what they knew about it. First we had better look a little more at the outward condition of the exiles. One thing at a time."

CHAPTER II.

IN BABYLON.

WE do not know, of course, just how far Nebuchadnezzar had at this time advanced with his building. The only thing we can do is to take the description of what he did, and then we can imagine that when the Jews first saw his work it was still in the doing.

"To begin with, Babylon was a wonder of the world, and must have struck the Jewish captives unwillingly with profound admiration. The walls of the city were of a fabulous height; *how* high I cannot tell you; reports vary from three hundred and fifty feet down. They must have been some eighty feet broad at top; for a chariot with four horses could turn on them; and the most moderate statement makes them enclose a space forty-one miles round. That would be five or six times as big as London, the area must have been of one hundred and thirty square miles."

"Not one city!"

"Not one continuous mass of buildings. No, the walls enclosed a space rather like a small kingdom. Streets and houses no doubt, regularly arranged, but with great intervals of orchards and gardens and groves and arable land. The Euphrates, here a beautiful stream two hundred yards wide, flowed through the city. A brick wall lined its bank on both sides; the streets were straight, crossing each other at right angles, and where they came to the river opening upon it by brazen gates in the wall. Here there were landing places and ferry boats to carry passengers over. There was a bridge besides, for day use, the drawbridges of which between pier and pier were raised at night. The houses were built of brick, three or four *stories* high, sometimes showing the natural colours of the

brick, sometimes plastered and painted. Don't you suppose the Israelites thought they had come into a sort of fairy-land?"

"Was it so pretty, do you think?"

"I think it must have been beautiful exceedingly, and very imposing. Especially when you take into account the temples and palaces. The great temple of Bel is said to have covered an area of six hundred feet square. Solid masonry. From that enormous foundation the tower rose in successive stages, less and less towards the top, where it was finished by a temple or shrine of the god. The enclosure surrounding the temple was itself near a quarter of a mile square; and a second lower temple was contained in it, within which was a statue of the god, in gold, on a golden throne and with a golden table in front of him. This is a sample of Babylonian splendour. The offerings made to the god we can imagine in corresponding magnificence. Herodotus says that on the yearly festival in his honour a thousand talents' weight of frankincense was burnt on the great altar outside."

"Uncle Sam, I should fancy that such a temple as you describe would have been very ugly."

"You may be sure it was very stately."

"That was just because of its size."

"Size does a good deal; witness the pyramids of Egypt. But here I think size was not all that produced the effect. The Babylonians, true to their original descent from the land of Ham, were extremely fond of colour, and used it in rich and brilliant combinations; in that unlike the Assyrians. I do not know with certainty how the tower of Bel at Babylon was adorned in this respect; but I can tell you how it was with the great temple at Borsippa, a dozen miles below. A great ruin is still remaining there, very impressive in its decay. Of that temple we have detailed information. It also was built in successive stages; like all other Chaldæan temples, I presume; and dedicated to the seven spheres, or the planets. So there were seven stages, coloured respectively, black, orange, scarlet, gold,

white, blue, silver. The colour of black belonged to Saturn ; Jupiter was orange, 'or more strictly sandal-wood colour ;' Mars red ; the sun gold ; Venus white ; Mercury blue ; the moon silver. The gold and silver stages are supposed to have been actually plated with those metals. What do you think now ? "

"It was a barbarous sort of splendour," said Dan.

"Certainly true. Yet splendour. And the same sort of magnificence was to be seen in their other edifices. The Babylonians had not alabaster slabs at hand, like the Assyrians, to sculpture them with the histories and exploits of kings and gods and then line their halls with them. No doubt such slabs could have been brought from the north, yet at very great expense. The expense might have been no hindrance ; but, however, the Babylonian method of adornment fell naturally into another line, according to the material they found at hand. They made excellent bricks. Unbaked brick was used for the interior of platforms and thick walls ; but the surface was made of kiln-burnt, and those of capital quality. Some of them were pale yellow, some very dark black blue ; the ordinary bricks were red. They were square, twelve or fourteen inches in surface with three or four inches of thickness, and stamped on one side with the king's name."

"The reigning king ? "

"Nebuchadnezzar. All the bricks found, almost all, are stamped with his name. Both at Babylon and elsewhere, at the ruins of other places."

"He could not have built everything, I should think," said Liph.

"He did, though ; built or rebuilt nearly everything in Babylonia. All the old ruins show it, and the towns of later times, which have been built of bricks from the ruins. They all bear Nebuchadnezzar's name. It is said that probably no man ever lived who left half such an amount of building behind him as his memorial. The ruins are unshapely now. But you may be sure that in their day they were gorgeously magnificent. I was going on to tell



than seventy years old, or less. I don't quite see why they should take on so."

"Think of the glory and happiness lost. Think of *how* it had been lost. Remember, the ark of the covenant was gone, with the tables of the law given to Moses. The fire that fell from heaven at the dedication of Solomon's Temple was extinguished for ever. The Shekinah was gone; probably they hoped it would come back; but for the present the desolation was utter, and the contrast very bitter between the 'noble and beautiful house' where their fathers had worshipped, and the burnt hill-top and the new foundations beginning to be laid by weak hands. If the young men shouted, it is no wonder the old men wept."

CHAPTER IX.

BUILDING.

THE next thing is, that the building of the Temple was stopped.

"Who are these 'adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,' iv. 1?"

"All their neighbours, pretty much, were their enemies; enemies from old time. These specially seem to have been their Samaritan neighbours. See 2 Kings xvii. 24-34. A mingled and mongrel race, from many lands, of many religions, here forced into one. There were two importations, one under Shalmaneser, or more properly, Sargon; the second much later, under Ezarhaddon."

"*Did* they worship the God of the Jews, as they said?"

"No. The Israelite priest, who was sent by the king of Assyria at their request to instruct them, was but one of the ministers of the golden calves; it was a very odious and mixed idolatry altogether."

"But what harm to let them help build?" asked Liph.
"They could build, I suppose, even if they were not right in their opinions."

"Ay, so men reason nowadays," said Uncle Sam.
"History repeats itself."

"Well, sir, why not?"

"The old reasons, Liph. On the part of outsiders, the Lord does not like service which is not obedient service; therefore He would not have liked that. On the part of His people, He has forbidden them to be 'unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' Zerubbabel and Joshua were right to say, 'Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God.'"

Liph was understood to murmur something about its being not very "liberal."

"Then the people 'weakened their hands,'—how?"

"Annoyances and interferences and threats, I suppose; taking down the courage of the workers. Not content with that, they 'hired counsellors,' probably at the court of Persia, 'to frustrate their purpose;' ands uceeded. Cyrus would know nothing about the matter; it was easy enough at such a court to hold back the supplies, and give a hint here and there to officers who could discourage the work by hindering workmen and stopping the transport of material or the payment of wages. The building was stopped. There was not energy enough, or will to the work, among the Jews to carry them through all obstacles. The building came to a standstill, and nothing more was done for fourteen or fifteen years; till Darius Hystaspes was king."

"Sir," said Liph, "the kings between Cyrus and Darius Hystaspes were Cambyases and Pseudo Smerdis."

"Yes. Well?"

"Neither of them was Ahasuerus or Artaxerxes."

"That is begging the question. Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes were names of honour. Smerdis was a usurper, who wished to establish the Magian religion in his empire, and so discouraged the purer Persian Zoroastrian faith. It was quite like him to interfere with the Jews; but it would have been very unlike a Persian king, who always shrank from reversing any decree of a former sovereign. The spirit of Ormuzd, their chief deity, was supposed to have spoken in them. Cambyases, accordingly, did nothing to trouble the doings at Jerusalem. And Darius, as soon as he knew of the decree of Cyrus, reaffirmed it."

"But these letters, or this letter, to Artaxerxes, speak of the *city* building; the Jews were not building the city."

"No, but it suited the purpose of the Jews' enemies to put the charge in that form."

"And who were Rehum and the rest?" said I.

"Rehum was a person high in office, civil governor perhaps; Shimshai, the secretary."

"Why was the letter written in Syrian?" Dan asked. "Was Syriac the language of the Samaritans?"

"No; they spoke a mixture, perhaps nearer Hebrew in part. Syriac was the official language of the court of Persia for countries west of the Euphrates.

"So the Temple building was stayed when it was but little more than begun. Five years of the reign of Cyrus, seven and a half of Cambyses, seven months of Smerdis, and a year of Darius passed away; and there had been nothing but hindrances. Supplies stopped, materials detained, men intimidated; finally the order of the king prohibiting any going on. But another cause had been at work. The people themselves had not been heartily engaged. They had been looking after their own interests; they were building their own houses, using perhaps some of the very timber which had been brought from Lebanon for the Temple. Their brethren in Babylon were thriving and growing rich; and these were seeking to get good crops and make the land give forth its old fruitfulness. And yet nothing prospered. Dry winds blew, which brought no rain clouds; or warm west winds came which blasted and withered what was growing. Blight and insects and plagues of various kinds kept the colony from thriving; and it seemed as if nature and nature's God were against them."

"How happened that, Uncle Sam?"

"It did not *happen*, my dear. It came according to a most logical sequence of cause and effect."

"How, sir?" said Liph.

"According to those words of our Master—'Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.'"

"And they had not?"

"They had not."

"Uncle Sam, where does it tell?"

"I will show you. Let us go on to the second year of Darius. The services and ceremonial were regularly kept up, as they could without a Temple; and so it came to a *feast* of the new moon. And this was the way of it. The

evening before, the high priest and the council had met to declare the time officially ; watchers were set upon high points and watch-towers, to spy the first appearance of the new moon. As soon as they saw it, they hastened away to tell the high priest and the council. Then the high priest said solemnly, 'It is hallowed,' and the Sanhedrim answered, 'It is hallowed.' Then fires were kindled over the hills to telegraph the announcement everywhere. The Samaritans used later to annoy the Jews by kindling watchfires on a wrong evening, so bringing everything into disorder. The Jews were obliged then to despatch messengers, instead of lighting fires. Which manner was used now, we do not know. The next day, all the people gathered around the altar of sacrifice. The daily lamb was offered. After that, the offerings for the new moon ; the burnt offering of two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs, with the flour and the oil belonging thereto, with quarts of wine poured out as a drinkoffering ; and a sin offering of a goat. While the burnt offering was offered, the priests blew the trumpets, and the psalms of praise called the great Hallel were sung. To the thoughtful and devout among the crowd it must have been rather a sorrowful occasion, in the contrast with what had been in former days ; to the rest it was a formality, to which they attached more or less importance. Then, while the people were still altogether, rose up and stood forth an old man, one of the oldest there, and addressed them in what would be nowadays thought a very extraordinary speech."

"Who was that ?"

"The prophet Haggai."

"Where does it say he was old, sir ?"

"Nowhere, directly. But it is inferred, from the fact that he spoke of the first Temple, chap. ii. 3, as if he were one of those who had seen it ; and also from the fact that all his public ministry was contained within the space of four months. If he had seen the first Temple, he must indeed have been an old man ; for Solomon's Temple had been destroyed now some sixty-seven or eight years. And if he

were not an old man, it would seem strange that no word of his is reported later than some four months after this time. But now see his speech—

“‘This people say, The time is not come to build the house of the Lord.’ That shows their condition of mind. They were carelessly leaving the building undone, submitting to hindrances, when if they had a mind they could have overcome hindrances. And then the old prophet gave them his message, which he told them came from the Lord.—‘Is it time for you, *you*, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house waste? Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.’”

“What did he mean?”

“‘*See what you are doing and what it is leading to.*’ And then he went on to remind them that they were having ill success on every hand. Crops were poor; they got food to live upon, but not enough to enjoy; and what they earned over and above somehow had a marvellous facility of melting away and disappearing. They had had a constant succession of what we should call ‘bad times.’ So the messenger of the Lord bade them look at their ways.”

“What had their ‘ways’ to do with bad times?”

“Everything. So the Lord told them. Read what Haggai said. You looked for a large yield, and you got a poor one; and when you brought home what you had gained, something happened to it. ‘Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.’ And therefore the dews of heaven had been withheld, and the ground was barren and drought came, and every produce and fruit of the land failed and was stinted.”

“Because the Temple building was stopped?” cried Liph.

“And the people ‘ran every man to his own.’ They sought their own particular advantage, and did not care about the Lord’s house.”

“I wonder if it is so sometimes nowadays?” said I.

“*There is no Temple to build nowadays,*” said Liph.

"There is the Temple, of which that one was but the image and symbol. The Lord is building Him a Temple of living stones, and all the Lord's true servants are at work on the building. And it is a complaint of one of His true servants, made many hundred years later, that 'all men seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.' However, there was a spirit in those old Jews which felt and roused up to the appeal of Haggai. Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest, and all the people with them, heard and obeyed and feared. Then Haggai gave them the encouraging promise, 'I am with you, saith the Lord.'

"That appeal was made the first of the month. The people made their preparations, and by the 24th were ready to begin the work again. Perhaps their hearts failed them a little; however, before another month was gone came the Feast of Tabernacles. The last day of that feast another message was delivered to the people by the hand of Haggai. Read it in the 2d chapter, the first nine verses."

"They did not think much of the new Temple," said I.

"Haggai calls it the *same*. 'This house,'" said Dan.

"The type was one, if the building were changed."

"Solomon's building was so splendid," I went on.

"Furthermore, it had much that to Zerubbabel's Temple was lacking. The ark, the Shekinah, the Urim and Thummim, the fire from heaven. But the Lord promises here that the latter glory of the house should be greater than the glory of gold, or even than the glory of the Light in the cloud which symbolized and signified the presence of God in the holy place. By and by should come into this Temple He who was the only glory of it; and not in the symbol of light or in the veil of a cloud, but in His own very person in the veil of His human form. 'And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.'"

"But, Uncle Sam, that was when Christ came. And the shaking of the heavens and the earth?"—

"The prophecy speaks in one breath of the first coming of Christ and of the culminating glory of His second com-

ing. So did Malachi's prophecy ; and many another in the same way joins the nearer and the further in one view, as it were."

"That prophecy must have been a great help to the people," said I ; "even if they could not quite understand it."

"So it was meant to be a great help. Their zeal needed encouragement. But their love needed purifying and increasing, too. In the very next month Zechariah began his preaching, and what he preached was repentance. See the first chapter of Zechariah, verses 1-6."

"Who was Zechariah ?"

"A young man, just beginning his career as Haggai's was closing. He was of a priest's family, and exercised the priest's office in due time ; he must have been a child when he was brought from Babylon ; and he was called to serve the Lord as a prophet before he was old enough to officiate as a priest."

"He told the Jews to 'turn to the Lord,'" said Dan. "I thought they were turned."

"True, in a sort. But in a vast majority of the people the national feeling had grown dull with the seventy years of exile. Think what a mere handful came back. Think, that of twenty-four courses of priests, only four sent representatives. And we shall not wonder perhaps that the religious and political life of even the remnant that did return needed quickening."

"Uncle Sam, what became of all the rest of the exiles, Jews and Israelites ?"

"In the course of years a good many came straggling back to their own land. Galilee, you know, was full in the time of Christ. The larger part became more or less mixed up with the Gentiles among whom they dwelt ; intermarried with them, and adopted their faith and manners. A very large number, however, kept their identity and their separateness ; mingling with the multitude of Jews whom Alexander's policy helped to scatter through the world, and *then again* with the remainder of their countrymen who

were driven out of Palestine by the Romans. These were, and are, the Jews of the Dispersion ; see John vii. 35 ; 1 Peter i. 1 ; James i. 1. To come back to Zerubbabel and his brethren. Three months, to a day, from the time that they had begun building again, Haggai brought another sharp reproof from the Lord to the people."

"But what for, now they were building ?

"You know they had set up the altar of sacrifice, and had been carefully observing all the forms that they could ; while still their first duty, the rebuilding of the Temple, had been neglected. Haggai reminded them that the altar and the sacrifice cannot hallow a disobedient people ; but on the other hand, their disobedience defiled and vitiated both sacrifice and altar. Then he bade them remember how, while they let the Temple lie waste, the Lord had smitten all their industries with disappointment and blight ; they had not put the two things together, but these were the facts ; and now from this time the Lord promised to bless them, now when they were neglecting perhaps their own interests to do His work. That is the rule, children. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.' Haggai's preaching closed with the promise to Zerubbabel, that the coming King and Deliverer should be of his line ; like the promise made before to Abraham and to David. 'I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, and will make thee as a signet.'"

"How is that ?"

"The royal signet bears the king's name, and carries the king's power, and is the instrument of conveying the king's pleasure. In Christ 'dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily.' It is another figure to express the manifold riches and beauty of the Messiah. Now, children, turn to the 5th of Ezra, and read. You see, as soon as Zerubbabel and his fellows began to go on with their work, the Persian governor of Syria and Phoenicia was informed of it, and came to see what they were about."

"And the Jews answered by a question !"

"No ; it should not be read so. Verse 4 means, they

told the governor and his associates the names of the leaders in the work. 'Then told we them after this manner what were the names of the men that were building this building.' They told them because they had been asked. See verse 10. This time the Jews were earnest and spirited, and 'the eye of their God was upon the elders' for good, and they were not allowed to be hindered. Tatnai went home and wrote up to court for orders. Read the rest of the chapter."

"Then Darius had search made for the decree. It was not in Babylon. How did they know where to look for it?"

"Probably there was a record that the edicts of Cyrus were laid up at Ecbatana."

"Ecbatana?"

"The capital city of Media. It stood near where a modern town called Hamedan now stands, at the foot of a high mountain ridge which thrusts itself out from the Zagros range upon the plain, ten thousand feet high. There was a famous palace, built by Cyaxares or Darius, the last Median king. Its circuit was the greater part of a mile; it was splendid with courts and colonnades, pillars of cedar or cypress, and panelled ceilings; the woodwork overlaid with gold and silver, and the roof plated with silver tiles. There, in some treasury of archives and precious things, the roll containing Cyrus' decree was found. Read it. Ezra vi. 1-12."

"It was all to be done at the king's expense," said Dan. "That would be a good lift to them."

"Sacrifices and all," said Liph. "Isn't that strange, for a Persian king?"

"Remember the stories of Daniel, the visions and prophecies and signs, by which God had forced from the rulers of the world-power the acknowledgment of His greatness and supremacy. They even desired the favour of this God; and so, you see, prayers and sacrifices were ordered to be offered on their behalf."

"I wonder if the Jews did it?"

"Yes, on certain days, for a long time thereafter."

"So the house was finished in four years, without any more trouble."

"Without any more real hindrance. But the people had unfriends around them, and were servants under the king of Persia and his servants ; that was trouble, for a Jew ; and entailed trouble. However, the Temple was finished. It stood over there in its place complete, with a half built, half ruined city around it. Things were in a weary state yet. Walls broken down and in rubbish heaps ; the gates gone ; defences laid low ; there was a vast deal to do yet before Jerusalem could begin to thrive."

"They ought to have begun with putting up the walls," said Liph.

"So men reason," said Uncle Sam. "But it is forgetting that the Lord is the defence of His people. Short-sighted ! short-sighted ! Except He keep the city, the watchman is of no use, nor the walls either. The Temple was finished and dedicated. It was not splendid like the first Temple, and the dedicating sacrifices were a sad contrast to those of that other day, when the 'sheep and oxen could not be numbered for multitude.' Notice that twelve he-goats were offered, as 'a sin offering for all Israel ;' the people, however scattered, being regarded still as one whole, and the little remnant in Judea being the only official presentment of them. That was in the twelfth month, Adar ; and in the next month they kept the passover. Evidently with a true revival of religious feeling, and with great unanimity ; for many of their brethren who had been mixed up with the neighbouring heathen, 'separated themselves unto them.'"

"Separated from what ?" said Liph.

"From heathen connections, heathen wives, heathen ways, and all the defilement therewith involved."

"But who is the king of Assyria, in verse 22 ?"

"Darius, the king of Persia, who was king over Assyria too."

CHAPTER X.

THE SILVER KINGDOM.

WHENEVER I looked over now towards the city and the Mosque of Omar, I used to call up in my imagination the time when the new Temple stood in the midst of ruins and disorder, and the walls of the city were still partly standing, and partly in heaps. I said I wondered how the people could bear to leave it so.

"They were few in number," said Uncle Sam ; "they were weak financially ; and to put up the walls all round the city, was a great undertaking. Also with unfriends on every side of them, and bitter enemies in some quarters, they knew they might reckon upon trouble and hindrance as soon as the work should begin. So it is not wonderful that they remained quiet and tried to better their circumstances in more private ways, letting the walls wait. Moreover, they had now no leaders. Zerubbabel and Joshua were gone ; Haggai, and probably Zechariah too, were dead. Until Ezra came from Babylon there was no one to head them."

"And when did he come ?"

"Fifty-seven years after the dedication of the new Temple. In the meanwhile the whole Jewish people came very near being swept away from the earth. We must look at that story, for the danger was the means of their great advancement."

"That is the story of Esther," said Dan.

"That is the story of Esther."

"I never could see where that story came in," Dan went on. "It always seems to stand by itself."

"It comes in the reign of the next king of Persia, who followed Darius Hystaspes. Ahasuerus, his son, better known to you under the name of Xerxes."

"Xerxes ! I know him," said Dan.

"If you know him, you may recognise him again in the story. But Tiny does not know him so well."

"Darius Hystaspes was a man," said Dan.

"Darius Hystaspes was a great monarch ; the greatest of all the Persian kings under Cyrus."

"What did he do ?" I asked.

"He had some notion of government," said Dan. "And he put things in a little order. All his empire, Tiny, he divided into portions and put under governors whom he called satraps ; and the tribute which each satrapy should pay was fixed and settled. And in war, Uncle Sam, he was good in war too. Where rebellion rose he put it down with a pretty strong hand ; and he carried his operations into Macedonia and Thrace, and even crossed the Danube to fight the Scythians. But Xerxes was contemptible."

"Darius died ?"—

"Before Christ 486, sir."

"Very well. Then came this weak, cruel, luxurious, tyrannical prince, his son Ahasuerus, or Xerxes.

"Was that the Xerxes who fought against the Greeks ?" I asked.

"And built his famous bridge of boats between Asia and Europe," said Dan. "Yes, Tiny, that is the man."

"But it don't call him Xerxes here ?"

"Never mind ; we are sure it was he. Turn to the first chapter of the book of Esther," said my uncle. "'This Ahasuerus reigned from India even unto Ethiopia ;' over what must have been a population of a hundred millions. And his court was splendid, with the splendour of the Arabian Nights. The story takes us at once to a scene and occasion of fairy-like beauty and magnificence, in the king's palace at Shushan, or Susa."

"Now where was Susa, Uncle Sam ?"

"Go in imagination beyond the Tigris. Fancy a beautiful plain, rich with grain and fruits, graceful with palm-trees, and sweet with citron and lemon blossoms. In the distance, but not more than some twenty-five miles away, a high

mountain range borders the horizon, rising to an elevation of eight or ten thousand feet. Cooling breezes come from its snowy tops to refresh the lower country, which is warm but delicious. Now fancy two little bright rivers sweeping through this plain, and at one point coming so near each other that not more than two miles and a quarter of the plain lie between. Just here, between the two streams, the city of Susa was situated. One of them was the famous Choaspes, the water of which was so bright and delicate that the king of Persia would drink no other ; it was carried along with him even when he went on warlike expeditions."

"How womanish !" said Liph.

"Indeed," said Priscilla, "women are not such fools as that.

"Perhaps they were in those days," said Uncle Sam. "Luxury is catching. Well, children, here in this flowery, breezy, lovely plain, and in the palace which Darius the Mede began here, was the favourite winter abode of the Persian kings. The palace of Darius was again like the Arabian Nights for beauty. It was lifted up on a lofty platform of stone and brick, which gave it a glorious look-out over the surrounding country. The mound of its ruins is more than a hundred feet high yet ; a hundred feet above the river."

"I should think people would dig into it," said Liph.

"People have dug into it."

"Did they find anything, sir ?"

"Enough to show to a certainty the plan and character of the edifice, when compared with ruins remaining in a more perfect state at Persepolis. The bases of pillars are found at certain regular intervals and in a certain peculiar arrangement."

"And what was it all like, Uncle Sam ?"

"We can give a pretty good guess, so much has been discovered. The whole, as I told you, was elevated on a great platform built up from the plain. In the centre of this platform it seems there was a very noble and beautiful

Great Hall of pillars. The platform was of enormous extent, you must understand ; and some of the staircases of access were among the most magnificent things of their kind. The Great Hall consisted of a central square of columns, thirty-six of them, six rows of six, measuring twenty-seven feet three inches from centre to centre. These columns were of exceedingly rich workmanship, carved and fluted, with capitals composed of two half bulls, upon which once rested the beams which connected the pillars above. Then, with an interval space of sixty-four feet to the east, a double row of twelve more columns stood flanking these, in two rows of six ; twelve more in similar position towards the north, and the like towards the west. Around this court you may imagine the beauties of a Persian garden, rich with roses and orange flowers and citron blossoms. Now to fill out the picture, fancy a pavement of coloured marbles, red and blue and white and black under and among all these pillars. Fancy hangings of blue and white, the Persian royal colours, shading off the sun, at the sides or overhead as might be desirable ; drawn up or let down, to exclude the dazzle of the sun's rays, or to let in the breezes coming over the flowery plains and allow the view to go unhindered to the snowy mountain tops and the glittering waters of the river. You can fancy the couches of gold and silver set by the side of the tables ; the gay draperies ; the golden vessels furnished for the guests to drink out of ; goblets and cups and bowls, all different from one another, so as to bring the utmost luxury of refinement into the pleasure of the entertainment."

"Uncle Sam, that sounds fascinating," said Priscilla.

"It is fascinating, my dear."

"But, what I was thinking," said Dan. "Does the world-power have all the prettiness and the pleasantness of things ? I mean, does all this you have been speaking of belong to the world-power ? I do not express myself well."

"I know what you mean," said Uncle Sam.

"I was thinking about the same thing," said L.

"You like the Arabian Nights sort of life, hey, Tiny!"

"I don't know," I answered. "I like all the pretty things. Uncle Sam, I do like them. *Do* they belong to the world-power?"

"The Lord Himself likes beautiful things, else He would not have made them, and made us so that we must like them. There is no harm in beauty, but good; and God has made the world so that it is full of things to be enjoyed. But now another question comes in. Can any one follow the Lord Jesus and do His work faithfully, and at the same time be seeking his own ease?"

We were all silent, until at last Dan answered, "He cannot."

"Then you see, Tiny."

"And these beautiful things *do* belong to the world-power!"

"Everything belongs to the world-power, that is not the Lord's," said my uncle. "So there comes in the rule by which we can judge. Whatever you do, 'do it in the name of the Lord Jesus;' what you cannot do for Him, or as His servant, leave alone."

"That could not have been a very 'refined' entertainment," said Liph, going back to my uncle's former words, "for it seems that the principal thing was to get drunk."

"Quite true. Rawlinson says that drunkenness had come to be a sort of institution. Once a year, at a certain feast, the king was bound to be drunk; and it seems he was drunk upon this occasion, since he called for the queen to show herself to the revellers."

"Then women did not show themselves generally?" said Priscilla.

"No. Not women of rank. Married women might not see even their own fathers and brothers. And Queen Vashti consulted her dignity in her refusal. The assembly of guests, after seven days' drinking, were in no condition to receive properly such an honour."

"Was this one of those feasts you spoke of, when the king was obliged to drink too much?"

the most powerful of three allies ; it does not appear that those two nations were tributary to Babylon ; but they were firm friends. Nebuchadnezzar's power and glory were especially manifested in his works. To have executed them he must have had, it is said, 'the command of well-nigh unlimited human strength ;' and no doubt his wars furnished that, since he had colonies of Phoenicians, Syrians, Jews, Moabites, Ammonites, and Egyptians settled in various parts of Mesopotamia and Babylonia. Indian and Persian historians tell of him ; one old historian says that his conquests extended through the north of Africa into Spain ; and another says that he went as far as the columns of Hercules. His power was settled, consolidated, quiet ; altogether, his kingdom was well 'that head of gold.' "

"Then comes the silver breast and arms. Oh, this is delightful ! I never understood all this before."

"The silver breast and arms, is the kingdom which succeeded Nebuchadnezzar's ; that of the Medes and Persians. Cyrus made himself king of both nations, and then, a few years after Nebuchadnezzar's death, took Babylon and established a new world-empire."

"How was it 'inferior' to the first ? as Daniel said it would be ?"

"In extent it was greater ; though some authorities think not. But, as has been well remarked, it is not the area of territory which makes the greatness of a kingdom, nor numbers of population. The Persian empire was enormously great in both, and exceedingly magnificent in power and state ; nevertheless it lacked the moral unity of the Babylonian. It was double, not single, in its elements ; Media and Persia were conjoint, though Persia was first. Cyrus, its first monarch, was a great man and a great conqueror. He subdued the Babylonian and the Lydian empires, and made himself master of the world, so to speak, for he was not master of Greece ; however, he was the undoubted head of the great world-power. Yet he did nothing that remained to tell of him, except his own tomb ; his successors in the throne were a very poor set ; and their

power was unwieldy and brutish. The silver kingdom was undoubtedly in every essential respect inferior to the gold ; while the two arms and two sides of the breast of the figure symbolised the twofold character of the empire."

"Then the brass kingdom. Was that still poorer? Brass is lower than silver."

"It is less splendid and beautiful, but it is stronger."

"And was it? What was it?"

"Alexander's. And the fourth kingdom is the Roman ; well characterised by the strength and force of iron. But that too was to crumble ; that too was divided into East and West, symbolised by the two legs ; then it was to give place to a number of smaller monarchies which should arise out of it ; and they, finally, and all forms of the world-power, should be broken and crushed and destroyed by the power of the kingdom which in the days of those latter kingdoms the Lord would set up."

"'A stone cut out without hands'"—said I.

"No man should notice its beginning, nor see whence it began to grow. You know how true a description that is. 'The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,' the Lord told the Pharisees. When after His resurrection the apostles began to speak the good news and to carry it about, and men began to believe in it, none of the philosophers and kings and rulers of the earth regarded what was going on. The Jews thought they had killed the danger ; till suddenly it was found that the new religion was taking wonderful proportions, and that it grew in spite of all efforts to crush it out."

"It hasn't filled the whole earth, though," said Liph.

"But it will."

"What means the mixture of iron and clay?"

"The iron quality of the Roman people, weakened by the common elements of which its enormous empire was made up. 'The strength of the iron' was in it, but it had ceased to be all iron."

"When will this other kingdom fill the whole earth?"
said Liph.

"You can read the 60th chapter of Isaiah for a description of it. The time will be, when the King comes ; and He has not told us when that will be ; only bade us watch and be ready."

"Do you suppose Nebuchadnezzar understood all this ?"

"No. For he knew nothing of the promised Messiah, so he did not understand *all this*. He comprehended the main facts. You see, his intelligence was satisfied ; he paid divine honour to Daniel as a man in whom was 'the spirit of the holy gods ;' and confessed that Daniel's God was a Lord of kings. But more than this, children, Daniel's prophecies lived on after him. Not the king only, but the Chaldeans took account of them and handed them down ; so that some of the magi were the first foreigners, near six hundred years later, to bring their homage to the new-born King whose coming Daniel had foretold. But let us go on. This was but the beginning of Daniel's prophesying. He was immediately put at the head of the whole body of Chaldeans and made governor of Babylon ; in which station it needed not the gifts of the king to make him rich. To be governor of the province of Babylon, in those days, meant to roll in riches. And when the last band of Jewish captives reached Babylon, in the year B.C. 585, Daniel had been already seventeen years in that post."

"I think Nebuchadnezzar was very good," said Priscilla.

"For a heathen prince, he was certainly very noble, very liberal. Nebuchadnezzar had a mind for great things, and could afford to recognise them even when they did not spring from himself nor make for his own pleasure. Here was a captive Jew filling the highest place in his kingdom ; and it was not a freak ; he kept it."

"What is the meaning of the last word in that chapter, 'Daniel sat in the gate of the king' ?"

"At the king's court. The *gate* is put for the building to which it gives access, the learned say ; and we are referred to Esther ii. 19, 21—iii. 2, &c."

"I can see what a comfort all this story and Daniel's

elevation would be to the captives. They would see that certainly God had not forgotten them."

"Another thing would mightily help that conviction. Just when it occurred we have no date to tell; only the probable supposition is, that it was after Nebuchadnezzar had conquered everybody and built up his immense power. The year after Jerusalem fell, Tyre was taken. Nebuchadnezzar went on and subdued Egypt; Moab and Ammon, the Arab tribes, and Syria and Phœnicia, all were brought under; and finally it came into the king's head to make and set up a golden image of his colossal world-power and to call upon all peoples to do homage to it. No doubt the idea was suggested by his famous dream; but Nebuchadnezzar was not content to be simply a 'head of gold'; he raised his enormous ninety-feet-high image all of gold, to the eye at least; we are not obliged to suppose it solid metal. That was the image of his world-power; and he called on all peoples to bow down. It was a typical demand!"

"Was this an idol?"

"Not at all. It was the embodiment of Nebuchadnezzar's greatness and dominion."

"But he bade people worship it."

"Paying homage to Nebuchadnezzar's world-power, would be at the same time bowing down to his gods; owning their supremacy. That was all the king wanted. It was by no means his purpose to interfere with anybody's religion; he only demanded that they should acknowledge his gods superior. No nation would make any objection to that, excepting the Jews only. For *them* to do it, would be to deny their own."

"He meant nobody should be left out."

"The scene must have been a wonderful one. Only so could it have done its work. Little did Nebuchadnezzar imagine, that in trying to glorify his own power he was but the instrument to spread the glory of the true God through all the lands of his dominion. The dream which Daniel *had interpreted* seventeen years before had had its effect

in a comparatively small circle ; it had given Daniel his position, and drawn an acknowledgment from the king, which *he* had probably forgotten ; though the whole affair lived in the writings and memories of some of the Jews. But what was done that day on the plain of Dura was told wherever Nebuchadnezzar had rule ; and that was, popularly speaking, all the world over."

"Where was that plain of Dura?"

"It is not known any further than the record tells us. In the province of Babylon, where to be sure there was no lack of such ground ; as it was all one plain, except for the canals and embankments which crossed it. The golden image could be seen from miles and miles away, glittering and shining in the sun ; and before it and around it gathered the representatives of all lands of the empire, a great multitude of the highest and the noblest. Their homage would be the homage of the whole. The king's vicegerents in the several countries ; the governors of provinces ; military commanders ; judges, lawyers, and treasurers, and prefects, or under governors, they were all there, waiting for the burst of music which should bid them bow all their lofty heads to the ground before the image. What a picture of the typical world-power, and of the adoration paid to it ! It is like the description given in the Apocalypse—'All the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast, and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast ? Who is able to make war with him ?' And then later it says, 'As many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed' Even so then !"

"But what is 'the beast,' Uncle Sam?"

"I think it is another form of the world-power, my dear. And the image is very often a golden image again. And people bow down at the sound of music. In a subsequent vision of Daniel, to which we shall come by and by, Nebuchadnezzar's world-power and the several other great empires which replaced it upon earth, were figured under the forms of separate beasts."

"I do not understand, Uncle Sam."

"No. Well, go on. Maybe we shall have more to say about this subject. Go on now with what was done on the plain of Dura. But remember Rev. vii. 9."

"They had a great many musical instruments," Dan remarked.

"The Babylonians were a music-loving people. In fact, they loved all sorts of delights of life; colour and sound and luxury and feasting. Three of these instruments were Greek; it is an instance which shows the wide commerce of the Babylonians; these instruments were imported, and as names of foreign articles of commerce travel always with the articles, these instruments were known in Asia by their Greek names. They came through merchants of Tyre, who traded east and west; or merchants of Babylon got them from Greek traders in the provinces of Asia Minor. There was already a great deal of Greek trade and intercourse in Asia; the monuments of Sargon show tribute brought him from Javan, that is, Greece; and Sennacherib conquered a Greek army which had come into Cilicia, and Greek mercenaries served under Ezar-haddon. So Greek musical instruments found their way into Asia among other things."

"What sort were they?"

"The harp; the psaltery, which is described as having 'a number of strings stretched over a hollow case or sounding board'; and the bagpipes, called dulcimer in the English version. Then of other instruments, there were the horn, or cornet; the flute or Pan's-pipe; and sackbut, another four-stringed instrument. And when the wild and sweet blast of all these was sent forth upon the air, the whole great sea of heads which filled the plain was levelled, every one falling to the ground. Only three heads not."

"Where was Daniel?"

"Not there, it would seem. There is no hint how or why he could be absent. It is just possible that Nebuchadnezzar purposely excepted him from the general order, knowing his man and not choosing to lose him. Some suppose that Daniel was there, and that the accusation

was made first against Daniel's three companions, by way of trying how far the king would go, before they ventured upon Daniel. I cannot tell."

"Where do you suppose the burning fiery furnace was?"

"Not far off, apparently; for the king could look in and see what was done. So also it is certain that the opening, or door, must have been in the side; and not at the top, as has been imagined. At the top nobody could have looked in, on peril of his life. Boys, you have here one of the most splendid instances of not 'following a multitude to do evil,' when those three young Hebrews stood in the plain of Dura. Ah, children, the Lord's service is frequently like that; and His words come true over and over again—'Whosoever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for My sake, shall find it.'"

"Sir," said Liph, fidgeting, "people do not always get off as those fellows did."

"The words stand true. That was only an image of the fact, not the fact itself. There are various ways of losing one's life for Christ, and dying is not always the hardest of them. And on the other hand, it is possible for a man to 'give his body to be burned,' and yet 'have not charity,' or Christian love; in which case it 'profiteth him nothing.'"

"Uncle Sam, you talk riddles."

"It is not I. And when the Bible words are a riddle to you, it is best to find out what the riddle means."

"Uncle Sam," said Priscilla, "Nebuchadnezzar was pretty gentle with those men. He inquired into the matter, and gave them another chance for life."

"He did not doubt the charge, however. His question 'Is it true?' does not mean that; the sense is rather an inquiry whether they were doing as they did with malicious intent; whether they had bethought them, and meant to do dishonour to his gods. And so he gave them another trial. But they quietly let him know that they had bethought themselves, and would be true to their God, whether

He would deliver them or not. That He could, they knew ; that He would, they were not sure ; it made no difference. Those three will be found among the blessed ones, at the Lord's coming, 'which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands ; and of such John saw in his vision that 'they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.' And similarly with the type on the plain of Dura—*they shall live, while those who cast them to death shall themselves die.*"

"It seems the Babylonians wore stockings," said Liph, reading the 21st verse.

"A conclusion not justified by the original. The articles of clothing here specified are rendered more correctly by under and upper garments, or tunics, and mantles ; the 'other garments' may refer to the head and feet coverings. So Herodotus describes the dress of the Babylonians. They wear, he says, a 'linen tunic reaching to the feet, and above it another tunic made in wool, besides which they have a short white cloak thrown round them, and shoes of a peculiar fashion. They have long hair, wear turbans on their heads, and anoint their whole body with perfumes. Every one carries a seal, and a walking-stick, carved at the top into the form of an apple, a rose, a lily, an eagle, or something similar ; for it is not their habit to use a stick without an ornament.'"

"And what sort of seals, pray ?"

"Not like yours. They were cylinders, from half an inch to three inches long ; generally not more than an inch ; and one-third as thick as they were long. They were pierced through their whole length, perhaps to allow their being worn upon a chain or a string, perhaps to admit a bit of metal for an axis, upon which they could turn. The material was according to circumstances, or the means of the wearer. Precious gems, rock crystal, agate, or a sort of composition ; which latter was the most common."

"What was engraven on the seal ?"

"The man's name and his father's name, and an intima-

tion what god he specially served. So now you have an idea of a Babylonian gentleman."

"And those three Jews, I suppose, were Babylonian gentlemen at that time. As they were governors, they must have been. But what did Nebuchadnezzar mean, in verse 25? What did he know about Christ?"

"Nothing; and so his words here are not quite correctly given. He said rather, like a heathen as he was, that the form of the fourth in the furnace was 'like a son of the gods'—that is all the same as saying that he was a god."

"Then, in verse 28, he says an 'angel'?"

"By that time he had heard the three Jews' account of the matter. But it is all the same; 'the angel of Jehovah' is an expression in the Old Testament which always means a revelation of God; different from other mentions of angels. Then followed the decree."

"A barbarous decree!" said Liph.

"From a barbarous court, why not? All the better; it carried nearly over the known world the story of this event and the king's conviction and conclusion concerning it. Do you see how this was one of the steps towards preparing the way for the spread of the truth which the Jews knew, and so the further spread of the further truth which was by and by to be made known to them and through them?"

"Of course, everywhere people would talk of the Jews, and their God, and their religion, and begin to hold them in particular respect. I see that."

"Well, that was one step. It takes a great many steps often to prepare the way for something the Lord will do in the earth."

"And now the king, I suppose, had the Jews in greater favour than ever."

"Doubtless. And with four of them holding such high office and consideration in the kingdom, one can see that the condition of the exiles would be greatly lightened, and their hearts greatly encouraged. The effect of this affair, and of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, would be twofold; taking

down the pride and presumption of the haughty world-power, and saving the spirit of the Lord's people from despair and apathy. For the Lord had a remnant yet, although the theocracy was at an end and the Lord's kingdom was never to be set up again until the Messiah came. The old earthly kingdom was ended and gone ; the new should be heavenly, and not come to an end."

"Uncle Sam, there were other things in Daniel's lifetime that served those same two purposes?"

"Certainly ; we are coming to them ; but we must not go on too fast. Let us see, if we can, just how the exiles were situated when they first took up their abode in the strange land."

"But you say, sir, the kingdom was ended ? The people went back, I thought, after seventy years."

"A remnant. But the theocracy was never re-established. The people had rebelled to the bitter end. The theocracy proper was broken up. They went back to their land, but not with the Lord for their nominal King. They were under the rule of the world-power still, and so remained, with a brief interval in the time of the Maccabees. From the overthrow which took place under Nebuchadnezzar, the real deliverance never came till Christ came ; and His deliverance thus far is only spiritual. The people of God are waiting still for the setting up of His kingdom in glory. So the old prophets were quite correct when in looking forward to the destruction that was coming, they spoke of the deliverance by Christ as the next thing. There is really nothing between, but the long time of waiting and hoping and expecting."

"They did not know it would be so long."

"No, happily. It was not longer than it had need to be, before the setting up of the kingdom ; and for the setting of it in glory, the Lord has promised, 'Behold, I come quickly.'"

CHAPTER IV.

LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD.

"I WONDER," said Priscilla the next evening, as we sat looking over to the Mosque of Omar lit up by the sinking sun,— "I wonder whether the exiles ever got accustomed to exile?"

"A great many of them did. It seems that they were well treated; not made slaves of; though probably they may have been obliged with other captives out of all lands, to render help in Nebuchadnezzar's building plans. Such plans could only have been executed by countless numbers of imported and subjugated hands. Otherwise they seem to have been unmolested and comfortable. They followed Jeremiah's counsel, given them in a letter, you remember; Jer. xxix. So they made brick and built them houses; they had ground enough, and planted vegetables and fruit-trees; had pomegranates, oranges, apples and pears of their own; and grapes also; and then, like the natives, no doubt they learned to get all sorts of uses out of the universal date-palm. Fruit, fresh and dried; palm sugar made from the sap; ropes twisted from the fibres of the bark; probably the sweet headachy wine too they made, and the vinegar; and the pith also was eaten and liked; while the wood gave material for furniture and other purposes. You can see, they might thrive with all these advantages; and moreover they learned perhaps another lesson from their neighbours and took to trading. Certainly the Jews had not been a trading people in their past history; and certainly in later times no nation has surpassed them, in some departments, at least, of business life. And Babylon was eminently a trading city."

"What did they trade in?"

"Their commerce was so wide and general, that I suppose they may be said to have traded in everything. By the sea, and you must know that in those days Babylon was much nearer the head of the Gulf than its ruins are now ; land is made so fast from the wash of the two rivers. By the sea they had intercourse with Arabia, the coasts of Africa, and Egypt. By the two great rivers which take their rise in the Armenian mountains many hundred miles away, the precious things of the northern mountains were sent down. Then overland caravans went and came by the way of the Euphrates and the desert to Aleppo and down the coast, or on into the further west of Asia Minor ; so keeping up communication with the Greek merchants who traded in the coasts of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, and with Tyre and Damascus and Egypt, all centres of luxury. What did they trade in ? Everything. Babylon received gems and wine, and sometimes stone, perhaps, from Armenia. From India, gems and dogs. It is related of one governor of Babylonia, that four large villages in the plain had no other tax laid upon them than furnishing the food for the governor's Indian hounds. And it is not uncommon to find models of particular dogs among the excavations in Babylon. They are stamped or written with the dog's name, generally giving the intimation that he was a good hunter. Then from the sea trade with Arabia the Babylonians got their frankincense ; from the Persian Gulf their walking-sticks, cotton, and pearls. Tin came from Phoenicia with many other things of use or luxury ; Tyre trading with all the world. From the eastern lands and from Media they received fine wool, perhaps gold and ivory, possibly silk. Then Babylon exported cloths and gems. She was famous for her carpets and muslins, even as Persia and India have been in later times. The Persian kings employed Babylonian muslins for their own dresses ; they were so fine in texture and so brilliant in dye. Don't you recollect that even very long before this, a 'goodly Babylonish garment' had tempted *the unhappy* Achan after the fall of Jericho ? The Baby-

Ionians made excellent pottery too ; and a large business was done in the engraving of stones for seals. And yet above all the industrial occupations, probably agriculture claimed the largest portion of the population. Altogether, you see the Jewish exiles had got into a new world ; as strange to them in its restless, gainful, varied activity as in its luxurious, soft enjoyment ; and they would soon learn both ; as surely as they would learn to go down into their cellar rooms for the heat of the summer day, and sleep on the house roofs for the air at night."

"Is it so hot there ?"

"Tremendous. One hundred and seven degrees in the shade."

"How in winter ?"

"Mild ; not much frost ; sometimes a keen wind from the north."

"What sort of friends and companions would the people be to them, Uncle Sam ?"

"It is not too easy to tell, from the notices of old writers. However, some things can be made out with pretty good certainty. The Babylonians were an intelligent people. Their 'wise men,' the Chaldeans technically so called, carried some branches of learning, for those days, high. The architectural achievements of the people were very extraordinary. The first Greek astronomers confessed their obligations to Babylonian learning. The common people, we see, were enterprising and clever ; and one old writer celebrates them as possessing two qualities in special ; they were honest, and they were contained and composed in their demeanour. We are not to suppose that they were gentle-tempered ; the pride and fierceness of Babylon was too well known ; so apparently it was a point of the same pride not to show temper. The thing is true of individuals at the present day, and is Chinese fashion, Mr. Robinson says ; so it was probably in Babylon, and reckoned a mark of their superior refinement and politeness."

"But they burnt people alive and put out their eyes ?"

"All the same, it might be done with superb calm, you know."

"That would make it just the more hatefully cruel."

"Which probably would not concern them. Another thing is told of the people ; they were extremely religious."

"Religious and cruel and proud is an odd mixture."

"There are different kinds of religion. Their kind was proud and magnificent, like the rest of Babylonish ways. The temples were very rich, and very imposing by their make and size, as well as by the lavish use of gold and silver in the images and altars connected with them. We are told of religious processions with shrines and images carried in state ; with wealth of offerings, and great pomp and splendour of observance. For, whatever the people were in other respects, they liked to honour their gods. The seals which every one wore were inscribed, as I told you, with the man's name, containing an allusion to some god in whose service or care he was supposed to be ; but in addition there would be perhaps a dozen mystical signs engraved, each of which was held to bear signification of some deity. The annual festival of Bel was a great occasion ; enormous offerings were made at the shrine of the god ; there was a grand procession in his honour ; and men kept a universal holiday, feasting and drinking in every house from palace to hovel. So it is supposed to have been, though I can tell you little of details with any certainty. In such fashion worship was carried on in Egypt, we know."

"How horrid it would all be to the Jews !" said I.

"Would it ? In their own land they had followed after all sorts of false deities, Baal and the rest, with the planets. Now Bel was answering to Jupiter, and Nebo to Mercury ; and Bel-Merodach was the special god of Babylon, where his great temple stood. Nevertheless, I think you are right, Tiny. Being exiles in Babylon, the very gods of the conquering city would be hateful to them ; and their bitter feeling was more inclined now to take up the former

utterances of their own prophets, which foretold downfall to Bel and Babylon both together."

"Did they? Where did they?"

"We will see presently. Are you getting a notion meanwhile of the new life into which the captives had come? the stir, the luxury, the business? Music and revelry, but also boats coming down the Euphrates, ships sailing in from the Persian Gulf, caravans arriving and departing laden with the riches of all quarters of the world. One caravan route went up the Euphrates and crossed into Northern Syria; another went over the desert to Tadmor and Damascus; a third took a more southerly way to Idumæa; there was a great road that led from Susa to Sardis, which latter place was also another centre of luxury; the journey took ninety days. Along these routes there were khans and wells, for protection and rest and refreshment."

"Travelling must have been a slow business anyhow."

"In the midst of all this new world, I suppose the hearts of the captives went with a mighty rebound back to their own lost land, and to the religion by which they might have lived, and would not. One thing at least is certain; they were cured of idol worship. From that time on, it has been their abhorrence. So we may safely conclude that they hated it then, made the most of the prophecies of return and restoration, and repeated to each other with bitter exultation the foretold destruction of their oppressor. You see that already in the 137th Psalm. 'O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us! happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones!'"

"But that is not Christian, Uncle Sam?"

"They were not Christian."

"It is not *good*."

"They were not good."

"But this is in the Bible, sir?"

"Balaam was not good, my dear, yet the Lord spoke by

him. And people that *were* good were sometimes given a message to speak, a message of threatening and retribution, which they must speak because the Lord gave it to them, but which yet was *His* word and not theirs. You may see that in some of David's psalms. David himself was certainly gentle-tempered and forgiving; but he was an historical type of the great King of Israel, and so he had to utter the judgment to be executed on those who oppose and betray *Him*, under the typical case of his own enemies and opposers. Those psalms were written only partially if at all by David the *man*; they were given to David the type and to David the prophet to utter in the name of the Lord. In this 137th Psalm unquestionably, however, the personal feeling of the psalmist breaks forth. But those were different times from ours; and the lesson of forgiving love could not be thoroughly taught until the first lesson of justice and law had been made plain."

"Well, how did this writer know that Babylon was to be destroyed?"

"Find Isaiah xiii. and read five verses."

Liph found it eagerly and read, and then said he did not understand.

"The Lord summons the hosts He has consecrated to the work, to come and enter the 'gates of the nobles'—*i.e.*, the city of princes, Babylon. Then the prophet sees in vision the gathering and the coming; 'in the mountains,' from the country of the Medes and the hill country north of them, over the Zagros range which separates them from Chaldæa, he sees them come; 'the host of the battle.' Then read from the 17th verse."

"Has it come true?" I asked when Liph had read.

"True to the letter."

"How could it happen?"

"We will see by and by. Now is not the best time to go into the destruction of Babylon. It came not all at once; it came by the working of several causes one after the other, some violent, some natural. But it came *inevitably, hopelessly*. Alexander the Great had a notion to

raise the city again to life and make it the capital of his world-empire. Ten thousand workmen were actually busy for two months at the mound of the great temple of Bel, trying to remove the rubbish."

"Why was the plan given up?"

"Alexander died. That was B.C. 323. Two hundred and sixty years later the place was reported a desert. So it has been since; a home for wild animals. Take notice meanwhile, that when Isaiah delivered this prophecy, some seven hundred and twelve years before Christ, the Medes were no great or distinguished nation or of any account as a power in Asia. They had just freed themselves from the rule of Assyria, but had not yet so much as one common king over their scattered tribes. Go on and read the 14th of Isaiah, to the 24th verse."

"I wonder if the exiles could believe it would ever be 'pools of water,'" said L. "That splendid city!"

"It is part of the detailed exactness of the description, however. The canal channels being neglected, some have been choked, and others broken; so that instead of the bright clear 'rivers' of running water, as the Jews called them, the land is turned into pestilent marshes. Whether they could believe it, as you say. It would be far easier to believe that New York will be a grazing ground by and by; or even London a hunting field. Next read the first nine verses of Isaiah xxi."

Dan read. "That fits," he cried. "'Go up, O Elam; besiege, O Media;'—it was the army of the Medes and Persians, under Cyrus, that took the city, Tiny. But what are all these chariots in verse 7?"

"Not chariots, but lines of riders. Delitzsch translates—'And he saw a procession of cavalry, pairs of horsemen, a procession of asses, a procession of camels; and listened sharply, as sharply as he could listen.'"

"Oh, one can understand that."

"It was usual with the Persians to carry numbers of asses and camels along in their warlike expeditions, and even into battle, that they might derange and confuse the

enemy. Different victories are reported to have been gained by the means of asses or camels brought into action. Also, camels and asses were used for mounting some of the tributary people fighting under the Persians. Then in verse 8, the man set to watch is supposed to describe his waiting and looking in vain ; he sees nothing of what is going on inside the city. Then appear a few messengers who are sent to carry the news—'Babylon is fallen !' "

"Did the Jews know of these prophecies ?"

"Certainly, they had known of them once long before. During the bad reigns of the later kings, probably Isaiah's words of all sorts were little regarded. Now in Babylon, there is no doubt but some of them at least were sought out and made much of. Read again the 47th chapter."

"This just agrees with the description you have been giving, Uncle Sam. 'Tender and delicate'—that tells of the luxuriant living ; 'the lady of kingdoms'—that is her supremacy, I suppose."

"And her superb civilisation, above others."

"'Given to pleasures'—'Dwelling carelessly'—saying in their heart, 'I am, and none else beside me ;'—there is pride. And then their sorceries and enchantments, and their 'wisdom and knowledge,' real wisdom and knowledge. I suppose."

"Unquestionably. The merchants also are mentioned. It is the very Babylon to which the exiles came. Then you must remember that Jeremiah had more recently and very distinctly told the Jews the same story. Even in the prophecy recorded in chap. xxv., see verses 12-26. The 'king of Sheshach' is the king of Babylon. And now read the 40th and 51st chapters of Jeremiah."

Dan read a few verses, and stopped.

"Sir, in this 20th verse, it speaks of *no iniquity in Israel* ; surely, the people were not so good as that after their return from captivity ? I know they did not fall back into idolatry ; but they were bad in other ways."

"Quite right ; so they were. To understand this and other words, you must take into account the type and the

typical handling in question. Babylon stood for the figure of the great world-power, the enemy of the Church, and where possible its oppressor ; which if it could would swallow it up. This power has taken different names and different forms in the course of the Church's history, remaining however the same hostile foe, to whom the devil gives 'his power and his seat, and great authority.' Now in the prophets, deliverance from Babylon is spoken of as the same with deliverance from the power which Babylon typified ; in the description of the one, words and phrases break out which find their complete realisation only in the other. So here. Israel should be indeed brought back to their land, and their past iniquity forgiven ; but the full sense of verse 20 belongs to the deliverance wrought by Christ, when the sins of those whom He delivers shall be as it were 'cast into the depths of the sea.' 'The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and *there shall be none.*' 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.' See Jer. xxxi. 31-34."

"Did the Jews understand this?"

"My dear, I do not know how much even the prophets themselves understood it. We know it was not all clear to them. And in the time when Jesus came to initiate His great deliverance, there were few indeed who wished for Him or expected Him as a spiritual Saviour. Then remember, Christ will also literally free and deliver His people from the outward wrong and injury which they suffer at the hands of the world-power ; that will be only by and by ; when Christ comes."

"I understand what Nebuchadnezzar did to Jerusalem," said Liph ; "but what has this other 'world-power' done, that you speak of?"

"It has fought, and is fighting, against the kingdom of God."

"How?"

"Setting up its rival claims and commands, and enforcing them. Tempting and seducing to its own service where it can ; and where it fails to do that, then hindering

and hurting all it can. Visiting with the sword and the spear, delivering to the lions and the fire, throwing down from precipices, driving into the deserts ; giving the sneer and the scoff and the cold shoulder where harder measures are not convenient ; making life and livelihood difficult, and withholding aid and sympathy. It approaches men with the most flattering offers ; it shows the gayest prospects ; it sets forth promises of ease and advantage ; and when allurements fail, if it cannot terrify, it leaves alone. See Elijah ; see John the Baptist ; see Isaiah and Jeremiah and Zechariah and all the prophets ; see the Christians under the Roman empire, under heathen masters, under the Mahomedan sword and ban, under the Inquisition ; under the temptations of all that the world can offer and the threat of all the disabilities it can inflict."

"What disabilities ?" said Liph again, with a mixture of curiosity and defiance.

"See a man who desires to obey God and observe the Sabbath, turned out of place and work by his employer ; left without bread or means to earn it. See another discountenanced and dismissed because he will not use what are called tricks of trade. See another again fairly driven to give up a calling or ruined in it, because to live like a Christian and to succeed in that calling is impossible. See others inadmissible to pleasant society, because people do not want to have a preacher among them."

"A Christian need not be a preacher."

"He cannot help it, if he *is* a Christian. His life will preach, and he will not hold his tongue neither. But, children, let us go back to Babylon and Jeremiah's prophecy."

"What is 'the land of Merathaim,' Jer. i. 21 ?"

"The land of 'double rebellion ;' in the sense of overabounding rebellion ; and 'the inhabitants of Pekod' should be, 'the inhabitants of visitation.'"

Dan read to the 27th verse, and stopped.

"Her storehouses were to be rifled, grain and other stores piled up and burnt ; the people, under the figure of oxen, *given up to slaughter*. See Jer. xlviii. 15."

"What is a 'brigandine'? li. 3."

"A coat of mail."

"The kings of the Medes,' verse 11. How many kings had the Medes?"

"I do not know. They were a set of independent tribes, each with its ruler or 'king,' bound together in a more or less loose fashion; until about B.C. 714, they broke away from Assyria and made themselves one king over them all. The governors are called here by their old title. In verse 14, the 'shout' is the shout of the vintage; here equivalent to the triumphant battle-cry."

Dan went on. "What is a 'burnt mountain,' verse 25?"

"An extinct volcano. Its calcareous stones are no longer good for anything. In verse 27, *Minni* is a name for Armenia, and *Ashkenaz* is a neighbouring country; that is all we are sure of."

Dan finished reading to the 58th verse, and then begged to know the meaning.

"You remember what the walls of Babylon were. Her gates were lofty and richly wrought; doors, posts, and thresholds made of bronze. The rest is a quotation from Hab. ii. 13. The king of Babylon had been at such cost and pains to build what should be thrown down."

"If the exiles remembered all this," said Priscilla, "they must have had very strange feelings about Babylon."

"But they knew it would not be for a good while yet," said I. "Seventy years must pass first."

"I suppose they did not many of them believe the story," said Dan.

"Hatred would help their faith," Uncle Sam remarked. "It is easy to believe what we want to believe. And with the whole pressure of pain and shame upon them at once, and the bitterness of contrast, I can well imagine that their feeling ran to those prophecies we have been reading, and took refuge in them and revelled in them. Secretly, no doubt, they recounted them to one another, amid their lamentations. For if you want to know the depth and keenness of their sorrow, look at one or two of the psalms.

written either at that time or at some other time of even less national pressure. The 74th first. See the cry of pain in the 10th verse, and the 19th. Then read the 77th Psalm; and see how the writer encouraged himself against despair. Then the 79th Psalm, and the 80th."

"But these were written by some one who trusted in God," said I, when Dan had read the psalms. "All the captives did not feel so?"

"They did not feel the trust; they knew and shared the pain and reproach, you may be sure. One proof is in the fact of the utter recoil of the Jewish mind from everything like idolatry, from that time on. Another proof is in the four new national fasts instituted and observed down to our day. One for the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem, when Nebuchadnezzar's armies invested it the second time, after going to meet Pharaoh Hophra; one for the date of the taking of the city; one for the burning of the Temple; and finally one for the day of the murder of Gedaliah, which put a last end to the hopes of Jewish patriots for that time. In the midst of the glories of Babylon, in the comforts of their new home and the interests of their new mode of life, they stopped and mourned for Jerusalem and the Temple and their lost national existence, when those days came round."

"They had not cared so much for the Temple when they had it," said I.

"They were tempted away to idolatry. Now that was over; and now they felt bitterly how all the old ways of approaching God and seeking His favour were cut off. No altar, no sacrifice, no incense, no high priest; it seemed as if they had no God. Then Daniel, and his position of trust and power, and his prophesyings, were a support to them; and then Ezekiel was another pillar of strength. The exiles would hear of him from their friends in Babylon; he and Daniel would be some of their first bits of comfort."

"What about Ezekiel? Just that he was a prophet?"

"I cannot understand Ezekiel," said Dan. "I have tried *the first chapter* and I never got any further."

"No wonder. And yet, just the story of that chapter would be an inexpressible comfort to the captives. Do you recollect that in the Tabernacle, and in the Temple, in the Holy of Holies, above the cherubim on the Mercy-seat, there was a cloud always hovering, in which the appearance of living Light, called the 'glory of the Lord,' was abiding? Not visible, for no mortal eye might be there; and the one day in the year when the high priest went in to make atonement, his first act was to burn incense which would fill the place with a thick smoke. 'For I will appear in the cloud upon the Mercy-seat,' the Lord had said."

"I remember the cloud was there. I did not know there was light in the cloud."

"I think so," said Uncle Sam. "Authorities are not agreed; but the revelation of the Lord's special presence anywhere else is always spoken of as accompanied with a wonderful manifestation of brilliant light. Well, children, this glory above the cherubims, which had been in the Temple, Ezekiel saw it, shown to himself, in a great cloud which he saw coming out of the north. He saw the likeness of the cherubim, and over them the likeness of a bright throne and the 'appearance of a man' upon it; but with such an appearance of glory as John the apostle saw when he was in Patmos and described in the first chapter of the Apocalypse. 'The appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord.' Then Ezekiel knew that it was a manifestation of the God of Israel."

Dan's face cleared up, and he looked delighted. "I begin to understand now," he said. "And so Ezekiel knew that God had not forsaken His people."

"And the people, when they heard the prophet's report of what he had seen, knew the same."

"But, merely seeing that would not tell them much," said Liph.

"That was not all. There was more. And 'seeing that' served to accredit the commands and messages given to Ezekiel. All was from the Lord, and He had not forgotten

His people. The exiles would hear of this. Next they would be told some of the signs and messages vouchsafed to the prophet. After this vision of the theophany, as it is called, Ezekiel received directions to prophesy of the fall of Jerusalem. This was in the fifth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin—B.C. 395, ten years before the taking of the city. Ezekiel was told to take a tile or brick, one of the large, square, flat bricks of the country, twelve inches or more in breadth, and draw upon it with some sharp-pointed instrument a picture of the city; draw camps around it, and battering-rams and mounds opposed to it; in short, the picture of a besieged place. Before this picture of a city the prophet was to lie down, and between it and him he was to set up an iron pan, or plate; such were used for baking cakes of bread and were to be found in every household. He was to lie on one side, and not change his posture, for three hundred and ninety days; then he was to turn to the other side and lie so for forty days more. And so he was to be a sign to the house of Israel."

"I should think they would be very much astonished at the sign. What would they think he meant?"

"He would tell them."

"What *did* he mean then?"

"We must go back. It is a piece of Bible symbolism. Do you remember how long the children of Israel were captive in Egypt?"

"Four hundred years," said Dan.

"Look at Gal. iii. 17. From Abraham and the promise, to Moses and the fulfilment, you see, was 430 years; that is precisely, 390 + 40 years; the last 40 years being the time of Moses' stay in Midian and of the people's bitterest bondage."

"But I don't see the connection," said Liph.

"Wait a bit. Look at Deut. xxviii. 68. There you find the threat, that if Israel should be utterly perverse the Lord would bring them into the like bondage again; the bondage of Egypt; called by the same name, although it would not be in the same country. Accordingly, see how

Hosea speaks of the same thing, viii. 13 ; vii. 16 ; ix. 3, 6. So, when Ezekiel was commanded to lie upon his side and bear the iniquity of Israel three hundred and ninety days, and then the iniquity of Judah forty days more, do you see, he intimated in the plainest manner that the old time of bondage should come back again ! It was *that* which they had brought upon themselves. And in like manner, Isaiah, speaking of the return from this captivity, likens it to the coming up out of Egypt ; xi. 15, 16."

"Do you think the Jews understood ?"

"Undoubtedly."

"But it was not four hundred and thirty days, or years, that the captivity lasted now," said Liph, "but only seventy years."

"And so the numbers are to be taken as symbolical."

"Then was the deliverance at the end of those seventy years ?" Prissy asked.

"Only a pledge and earnest and figure of the deliverance. The real deliverance was not till Messiah came. Till then the Jews were not free from the dominion of the world-power ; neither are they now ; nor will they be, till they own Him."

"Then what deliverance did Christ bring ? that is what I do not see."

"The real deliverance, my child, from all our enemies ; from the power which gave all their force and emphasis to the world empires we have been speaking of, and of which they were but an outward expression. From all that, Christ has set His people free ; and the outward deliverance too tarries but until His next coming in glory. Therefore the prophets speak of both things in a breath ; the outer and inner being in a real sense one, the bondage and the release being spiritual and formal both, though not both equally manifest at the same time."

There was a silence, while we sat meditating ; and then Liph brought us back to the chapter of Ezekiel we had been reading.

"Will you read the 7th verse," said he. "Pray why should his arm be uncovered ? wasn't it enough to lie there ?"

"Not enough for the sign he was to give. The bare outstretched arm of God's messenger, stretched out against the city, don't you see what that meant ? Compare Isa. lii. 10. And the iron pan set up between the prophet and the city—look at Isa. lix. 2 and Lam. iii. 44. Then followed another sign."

"But, stop, Uncle Sam ; I don't see how Ezekiel *could* be still on one side so long."

"See verse 8, Tiny. The Lord would deprive him of the power of turning, so that the sign might be accomplished."

"I think Ezekiel had a hard time," said Dan.

"Does a good soldier ask for an easy time ? I recommend you to study 2 Tim. ii. 3. Ezekiel was next commanded to prepare corn and seeds of various kinds and make his bread-cakes of them ; and eat his bread, when made, not at full meals, but by bits at a time,—so to show to the people the straits of famine that would come upon the besieged city. All sorts of food would be eaten, and that by weight and measure. Do you think the beholders would forget what the prophet told them in this impressive fashion ?"

"This was before the actual siege ?"

"Several years."

"What was it for, after all ?" Liph demanded.

"Another teaching of the people, if they would learn. Moreover, the fact coming after the prophecy would attest Ezekiel's mission from the Lord ; and seal what else he had to deliver."

"And at the time we are speaking of, the last come Jewish exiles could prove the truth of the fact."

"Of course. So now, on one side the captives would tell their friends in Babylon what they had suffered ; and the others would tell *them* how Ezekiel had foretold it all. And he would be attested as a prophet of the Lord. And so, further messages delivered by him, and relating to times still future, would gain credence and be greatly regarded. Daniel and Ezekiel were the two chief stays of the hopes of the people."

CHAPTER V.

EZEKIEL'S MESSAGES.

"UNCLE SAM," I began the next evening, "I should like to know just what the captives did hope and expect in those days?"

"Why you do!" said Liph. "They expected that Babylon would be knocked to pieces; and they hoped they would live to see it."

"They hoped to live to a great age then," said I; "for Babylon was not to be destroyed for seventy years."

"Seventy years were to be counted from the *first* carrying into exile, not from the last, before Babylon should be taken by the Medes and Persians. But it was not to be destroyed then, though its idols would be. Its destruction came later, and gradually."

"Did it? But it was not that I was thinking of. I mean, I should like to know what the Jews expected and hoped for themselves."

"They expected what the prophets had told them, I suppose," said Dan; "now that they had made up their minds to believe the prophets."

"I don't know what the prophets had told them to expect, or how much they could understand. That is what I want to know."

"I think I can tell you something about it. But first, we must hear the remaining messages of trouble with which Ezekiel had been charged. These the exiles would discuss one with another, and from their fulfilment gather the certainty of other prophesyings not come to pass yet. That has been the way with prophecy all along; some lesser near accomplishment of threat or promise serving as an image and an earnest at once of that which was further off."

"I understand that," said Dan. "I think I understand how necessary it was."

"I thought we *had* heard Ezekiel's messages of trouble," said Liph.

"Only part of them. Don't you like it, Liph?"

"I like it, sir. How do we know he really did all these odd things?"

"Think a minute. Suppose a book were written now, telling all sorts of stories, untrue, about somebody very well known in our day; stories open to public criticism and which everybody knew were fabrications. Is it likely such a book would come into universal veneration and be preserved and cherished as divine and sacred?"

"No, sir," said Liph, when my uncle waited for an answer.

"That is the case with the book of Ezekiel. If the things reported are strange, they were well known to be true; and strange they were meant to be, that they might arrest attention and be felt and remembered. We saw how he prophesied of siege laid to Jerusalem, and of the famine that would result from the city's being shut up. Next came the declaration of what the issue of the siege would be. Read four verses of the 5th chapter of Ezekiel."

"Do you suppose he *did* this?"

"I suppose he did whatever he was commanded. And think what a sign it would be to the lookers-on. He shaved the hair off his head. He took a balance, and in the sight of the beholders, weighed the hair, dividing it carefully into three parts. One portion, when the symbolie siege was ended, he piled on the brick which had the city drawn on it, and burnt there. Another portion he cut and chopped with a knife. The last third he scattered to the winds. Would the people who saw it forget, do you think, what it meant?"

"What did it mean?"

"Read the rest of the chapter."

We read and studied; and then I begged to know the meaning of the few hairs which the prophet bound in his skirts.

"They mean the little remnant saved after all."

"But some of *them* were to be cast into the fire. And how was a fire to come forth *from them* into all the house of Israel?"

"This is another sort of fire; the fire of purification. From some of the saved remnant would such fire go forth into the world. Witness Matt. iii. 11; Isa. iv. 4; Zech. xiii. 9; Luke xii. 49; and Ezek. vi. 6-9."

"O Uncle Sam! how beautiful, how strange, how striking it all is!" I exclaimed.

"Striking," said Liph. "I don't see the beauty."

"Ah, but I do," I said.

"Liph misses the harmonies, which you are finding, Tiny. Never mind; let us go on."

"One thing more first. In chap. v., verse 9. Was *that* siege and conquest of Jerusalem worse than the one under Titus?"

"Presumably not. The distinction lay in something else. 'That which I have not done, and whereunto I will not do any more the like'—was not the work of fire and sword, but the casting away of the people of Israel to be for the time no people of God. Their existence as such temporarily ceased. That was never to happen again."

"How was it when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus?"

"Not one of the people of God was in the city. Christians were the true Israel then. The type had given place to the reality."

"I suppose, the Jews who had been in Babylon a good while, told all these things to the new-comers?"

"Of course. And the new-comers told them in return how exactly the facts had been according to the prophecy. So Ezekiel's mission as a prophet of the Lord was fully accredited, and every future word of his would come with its full authority. Especially after the two parties had compared notes over another and somewhat later utterance of his. Turn to the eighth chapter. In the sixth year of Jehoiachin's captivity, which is the same thing with the sixth year of Zedekiah's reign, Ezekiel had another vision.

It was not quite three years then before Nebuchadnezzar's laying siege to the city ; and Jerusalem was hastening to her downfall. Ezekiel was in his own house, in the company of some of the elders, when 'the hand of the Lord fell upon him.' That expression always means a peculiar communication of divine power, by which the prophet was enabled to see or do or know what would have been impossible to him in his natural state. All of a sudden he saw that glorious likeness which he had seen before by the river Chebar, such as Daniel saw, and John in Patmos ; and a wind seemed to carry him through the air to Jerusalem."

"It says, 'the spirit.'"

"The word is one. It may be translated here, 'wind.' He was thus carried, as it seemed, to the north gate of the court of the priests in the Temple. This gate led into an outer court, not out of the Temple enclosure. Here he saw an idol image. Then he was taken to the outer court, told to break through a hole in the wall ; and going in, there found seventy elders burning incense to images of beasts portrayed upon the wall of a secret chamber. This is explained in verse 12. It is a representation, not of such an actual worshipping assembly, but of what the chiefs of the nation did 'in the dark,' each one in his own image chamber. The number seventy, being the number of the representative elders, stands for the whole nation ; see Exod. xxiv. 1, and Num. xi. 16. Next he was taken to the north entrance gate, and there were women weeping for Thammuz."

"And what *does* that mean, Uncle Sam ?"

"Thammuz is another name for Adonis. The story of the heathen mythology is, that Adonis was killed and brought to life again. Furthermore, this befel in the month of June ; which accordingly they called by his name and remembered to his honour. They held a special festival then, in commemoration of the fact ; and these women were mourning for the death of Adonis. I suppose the whole story was an accommodation of nature worship, and celebrated

the revivifying power of the sun. But the worship was of a very low kind. Then, in the court of the priests, between the temple and the altar, in the most sacred part of the court, were twenty-five men worshipping the sun. The heads of the twenty-four courses of priests, with the high priest as the twenty-fifth, were symbolised by these men. So the whole nation under the seventy elders, and the whole priesthood under the twenty-five priests, were intended and included. All gone astray ; all given over to the worship of heathen deities. So then comes the vision of judgment which was shown to the prophet. Read chap. ix."

"Who are these six men?"

"By the word used to describe them, they are the watching angels who have charge over the city. Elsewhere the word is often used to denote earthly guards or protectors or presiders ; here they are not earthly."

"Uncle Sam, this is like things in the Revelation."

"Very like."

"What is this man with the ink horn?"

"The recording angel."

"And what is the mark set upon the servants of God?"

"It was a cross, in form ; the shape of a certain letter, commonly used in those days for a sign."

"But that is remarkable, Uncle Sam?"

"Yes, it fits, children. It reminds one of the sealing in Rev. vii. 3, where angels are again the agents, but the field of their work is larger. This helps one to understand that, as it was meant to do. Then followed in Ezekiel's vision the command to the angel to scatter coals of fire over Jerusalem, foreshowing the burning of the city. And then the prophet saw how the presence of the Lord forsook the Temple. The glorious throne above the cherubim, which he had seen at first in Mesopotamia, he saw now hovering over the court, just south of the great altar. Then the bright cloud, through which the glory of the Divine Presence shone, so that the whole court was bright with the brilliance, left the threshold of the building, where it had been during the giving of the foregoing commands, and stood over the

cherubims ; and the cherubims lifted their wings and removed and left the Temple, and stood at the eastern outer gate of the outer court. It was gone ; it was never to come back ; the glory of the Presence of the Lord. Never ; until the time prophesied by Malachi. Mal. iii. 1-3."

"When was that ?" I asked, after we had read the words. "John the Baptist was this messenger I know, and it was just before Christ came."

"He came, but He did not stay. The people rejected Him ; and that Temple was laid in ashes. Besides, *that* coming could not be called a 'great and dreadful day.' No, the Lord will come yet, in glory, to dwell in the new Temple, which is building with living stones even now ; and then the glory of the Lord will be the light of it."

"Will that be a dreadful day ?"

"To His enemies ; yes, to His enemies. Next, children, in chap. xi. is told how Ezekiel was shown in his vision twenty-five other men at the gate of the Temple. These are supposed to represent the twelve tribe princes and twelve government or army officers, with the king perhaps to make up the number twenty-five : altogether typifying the civil government, as the seventy had stood for the body of the nation and the twenty-five priests for the priesthood. These are described as wicked counsellors and disobedient unbelievers. And after delivering his prophecy against them, Ezekiel saw the Presence of the Lord quit the city and go to the Mount of Olives. Then the wind lifted the prophet up and carried him back to Chaldaea."

"Uncle Sam, all that is very wonderful."

"Is it ? Don't you see, children, how simply and clearly it made known to the people the Lord's action towards them and the reasons of it ?"

"Oh yes, but"——

"It is unlike the preaching of nowadays. Yes, the times are different, and the needs of men."

"Why ?" Liph asked.

"Those lessons having been given, the Lord does not repeat them. There they are for us to study."

"But, sir, the Jews of that time could have understood plain speaking, without such visions and sights."

"They understood, but they were slow to believe. These things which Ezekiel reported could not fail to make their impression. We may be sure that they were treasured in memory, and told from one to another at the time; they were carried back to Palestine by people passing to and fro; and when the last exiles arrived in Babylon these things were told them anew, and from them received their confirmation; so that the universal conviction would be that God had nevertheless not utterly forsaken His people. Ezekiel was a great prophet, and Daniel was another captive Jew holding the first place at court. There is one more prophecy of Ezekiel which would be mentioned and dwelt upon at this time. It is in the 24th chapter. The day that Nebuchadnezzar opened the siege against Jerusalem, Ezekiel in Mesopotamia told the captives of it. From that time that day was kept as a fast-day. There we have one token how the people felt, Tiny. And presently we shall find another. Ezekiel showed the people first what would be the event of the siege. According to order, he took a great brazen pot, filled it with pieces of meat good and strong, with the bones; set fire under, and boiled the pot till flesh and bones were boiled away to a jelly. Then emptying the pot, he set it empty upon the furious fire, that the pot itself might be burnt out and so cleansed from the rust which was in it. And this he interpreted. The pot was Jerusalem. The meat and bones were her population. The fire signified the fury of the siege. Jerusalem's inhabitants should be destroyed and emptied out of her, and lastly the city itself, defiled by the sin and bloodshed committed in her, should be cleansed with fire; fire of destruction."

"Do you suppose the people believed him?"

"Afterwards, when the events fell out as he had predicted."

"It is a dreadful sort of preaching!"

"Effective"—said Dan. "And I suppose, that is what

preaching ought to be. But it must be fearful to be such a preacher."

"Read the 2nd chapter of Ezekiel."

"I am glad I live in these times," was Dan's conclusion.

"My boy, if that means that you think a true prophet nowadays can be smooth-tongued and prophesy soft things only, you are mistaken. There is nothing in the Old Testament tremendous like some of the messages of the New Testament; except indeed that those are the types of these. But the reality exceeds the type. To go back to Ezekiel.—That same day, the Lord gave His servant another sign. His wife died. At evening she died. According to custom, Ezekiel should have appeared next in public with his head bared, his beard and lower part of the face veiled, his feet bare, his garment torn. But none of these things were done. Ezekiel showed himself the following day without any signs of mourning. He did not even 'eat the bread of men,' which is thought to refer to portions sent by friends to a house of mourning. None of these things did Ezekiel do. Of course his neighbours begged him to explain his strange conduct. And then he told them that he was a sign for them. The day was coming when *their* delight and pride, the sanctuary at Jerusalem, Jerusalem itself, and their nearest and dearest whom they had left there, should be destroyed; and in the depth of their grief and humiliation they too would leave omitted all the usual signs of mourning, and sit in dumb misery, 'mourning one to another.' It would be a grief beyond all observances; which would mock at observances. And now when the last exiles were carried to Babylon, the time he had predicted was come. So you can imagine how they felt Tiny."

"And then at last they believed what he said?"

"When the event proved it. Yes, and they did in some degree change. In the bitterness of their humiliation and sorrow there grew up a fierce rage against idolatry, which has lasted to this day; partly, I suppose, because it was a

Babylonish sin, partly because it had been their own. The name by which they called the Captivity, itself speaks a volume. *Guloth* = 'stripped bare.' With all the comfort of their new homes, and with all the beauty and novelty of their new surroundings, and the interest of new lines of business and ways of life, there lived on more or less in many families the grief and longing towards Jerusalem, hatred towards their captors, and a wild, keen hope towards the promised return."

"Some families forgot all about it, or there would more have gone home when they did go," said Liph.

"Certainly; many forgot, in time, all about it; and like Lot, preferred the fatness of Babylon to the rocky fortresses of Judea. It is a choice frequent at the present day. The plenty of food, the ease of living, the luxurious climate, the splendour of the place, all had its effect. But *some* looked and longed for redemption, Tiny."

"They understood it was promised, didn't they?"

"And so it appears that they kept themselves in a certain way ready for it. It seems they did not let old customs die; the 'elders' were still recognised as elders; the genealogical lists were carefully preserved and carried forward; they observed the four fasts in the year, of which I told you. They seem to have at last submitted to Jeremiah's recommendation, and to have settled down into the life of peaceable citizens, making the best of the situation. But, remember, they had no Temple and no altar and no incense and no sacrifice. All the legal formal ways of approaching to God and making their peace with Him were cut off. How bitterly the believing Jews felt this, it is difficult for you to comprehend. They were thrown back upon the prophecies of restoration for their one sole ground of comfort."

"Now are we going to look at them, Uncle Sam?"

"Yes, child. Look first at Lev. xxvi. 39-45."

"I knew *that* before, Uncle Sam."

"And they ought to have known it. But I want you to see how the Lord was simply true to His word, in all that

He did ; 'The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Now read Isa. xl. 1-11."

"But this is the deliverance of Christ," I said.

"That is the deliverance towards which was the prophetic outlook, from the time of the Captivity on. The Presence of the Lord had ceased to be with the people ; their eyes were to the time when He would come again. The people had fallen under the rule of the world-power ; they groaned for deliverance ; but deliverance now was to begin with a radical deliverance, from Him who is the soul of the world-power ; that is, the devil. The restoration of the Lord's personal reign would not be till Christ set up His kingdom, and it is not yet, in the earthly sense ; it is for that we are waiting. The return of the Jews from Babylon and their establishment in their own land, were just a faint earnest and figure, Tiny, of *that* restoration and freedom and inheritance which Christ will bring with Him when He comes."

"Restoration to what, sir?" said Liph.

"Enjoyment of what the Bible calls 'the purchased possession.' Eph. i. 14."

"But what is that, sir?"

"The land promised to Abraham and his seed ; and that is explained to be the whole earth. See Rom. iv. 13. And if we be Christ's we are Abraham's seed. So the case is made out, my boy. Don't you know, it is over and over promised that the saints shall inherit the earth? Well, as I said, that is what the prophecies look forward to ; and they grasp the immediate restoration under Cyrus as the near earnest and image of that greater and further restoration ; speaking of the one and of the other in a breath, as it were. For a good instance—read Isa. xlv. 21-28."

"Oh, I think I see !" said I. "I never saw it before. Those first verses, 21-23, were *a little* true in Cyrus' time, and entirely true only when Christ died."

"Go on, and read the first thirteen verses of the next chapter."

"'The two-leaved gates'—were those the gates of *Babylon*?"

"The 'gates of brass'—Nebuchadnezzar's beautiful gates, which he thought so strong, in the great wall of his Babylon. In chap. xlv. 1, 2, you have the fate of the great images of Bel and Nebo, out of the splendid Temple of Belus at Babylon, and from the other equally magnificent temple at Borsippa, a few miles away, which was dedicated to Nebo. The ruins of this last building are still standing more than one hundred and fifty feet high above the plain. The prophet sees the gold and silver idols laden upon camels' backs, in most inglorious fashion, bowing and toppling in helpless unwieldiness; for the Persians served no idols, and showed them no respect. Read the chapter through. And now, Tiny, read the 49th chapter, and see how the deliverance of Christ is spoken of in terms which also cover and describe the restoration under Cyrus."

I thought Liph made a gesture of weariness, but I was not weary; and we read the chapter through. With a little help from Uncle Sam I could understand it, and it was unspeakably beautiful to me.

"Now, Liph," said my uncle, "begin at chap. li. 17, and read to lii. 12. Then see how the prophecy immediately passes on to describe the Messiah and His work. We cannot follow into all the succeeding chapters which dwell on this. Turn now to Jer. xxiv. 5-7."

"I understand *that*," said Liph.

"Then see Jeremiah's letter to the captives, xxix. 10-14."

"That is plain too. Seventy years."

"I hope the name of Cyrus is plain," I said.

"When do the seventy years count from?"

"Jehoiakim's fourth year, when the captivity began. That was B.C. 606. The first year of Cyrus as sole ruler was B.C. 536. See also Jer. xxv. 12. And then, Liph, turn over to Jer. xxx. 10, and read to xxxi. 14."

"But oh, Uncle Sam," I cried, "this goes over into the salvation of Christ too. 'They shall not sorrow any more at all.' That has not come to pass yet."

"Not yet; it will come. Meantime, do you see, Tiny, how the two deliverances, near and far, are pictured and

promised together? Then to come nearer still to the time of the exiles, see what their own Ezekiel had promised, even newly, in the midst of his foretellings of judgment—Ezek. xi. 17-20."

"Ah, but that is the two things in one again," said I. "The stony heart is not out of their flesh yet."

"But it *is* out of those whom Christ has delivered from bondage," said my uncle. "Now to go on with our history. Among the captive Jews the course of things was what one might expect. Many sank down into the condition of contented Babylonian citizens; made money, got comfortable homes, adopted the arts and civilisation of their new neighbours, and finally took root in the soil. Only in a few, comparatively, the fire of patriotism still burned; and the longing and the hope to see home again was kept alive by the promises and the signs which God gave them. They kept their records, wrote out and collected the prophecies, observed the national fasts, watched the signs and waited.

"Meanwhile things looked as if their bonds would never be broken. Nebuchadnezzar swept on in his splendid career. Tyre fell the year after Jerusalem. Four years later Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt and conquered it—You remember Jeremiah had forewarned the Jews who would take refuge there, that they should not escape 'the sound of the trumpet,' which they so feared. After that we hear of no great wars of Nebuchadnezzar—only of his works. He built enormous embankments upon the shores of the Gulf and upon the banks of the rivers; one at Bagdad is still in existence. He made a reservoir for the better irrigating of the country, which was one hundred and thirty-eight miles in circumference; and in all the ruins of old cities in Upper Babylonia hardly any name is to be seen upon the bricks beside his. His empire was consolidated, his sway was undisputed. And then came a culmination of the great king's pride, and then a terrible downfall. Read the 4th chapter of Daniel, children."

"*He was* 'at ease in his house, and flourishing in his

palace," said Dan, repeating the 4th verse. "That is expressive enough."

"What I should like to know," said Liph, "is, why he did not call in Daniel at once, instead of all the other dumb magicians. He knew Daniel could do what he wanted."

"It does seem strange. We must recollect that now twenty-five or thirty years had passed since that first dream which Daniel interpreted; years of proud security and busy magnificence. Nebuchadnezzar had conquered, and ruled, and builded; he was 'at rest' and 'flourishing'; in all likelihood he had forgotten how Daniel had come to be master of the magicians. Or else, he did remember, and was shy of Daniel's interpretation, having a fear that the dream boded him no good. For some reason, he seems to have called first for the magi; and only when they failed, then sent for the chief of the magi."

"Did Nebuchadnezzar believe in God, Uncle Sam?"

"No, not as the only true God. What he says in verse 9, is only according to heathen ways of thinking."

"Then, Uncle Sam, what are the 'watchers' and the 'holy ones,' in verses 17 and 13?"

"They must signify angels, the messengers by whom the Most High executes His will upon earth. The Babylonians believed in such heavenly beings doing the intermediate work between earth and the great gods; only *they* called them divine. Nebuchadnezzar speaks of them according to his conception of them; but we know that a 'decree' of an angel means simply the carrying out of a supreme command of God. So the angel warned the king, that it is the Most High who alone rules. Watchers, it appears that the angels are; and indeed watchers over special spheres of activity, each with his charge. So much we learn from several passages."

"Did Daniel wait a whole hour before giving the king his answer?"

"It is said the word so translated means in Bible use, only a 'moment'—and got its meaning of longer duration later, in Rabbinical times."

"Why was Daniel so troubled?"

"Was it not hard to tell the magnificent monarch what a change should pass upon him? for he was a very noble heathen, children; his acknowledgment of the truth, when he saw it, and his humbling of himself before the power he had offended, are very fine examples of what a truly manly man will do."

"How had he offended so much?"

"By pride and lawlessness. See verses 25 and 27."

"Well," said Liph, "I think he had a sort of right to be proud."

"If anything could give a man the right. I suppose the view of the city as Nebuchadnezzar saw it from the roof of his palace, was beautiful exceedingly; with its noble buildings, its wonderful walls, the park-like spaces adorned with trees and flowers, and the river flowing in the midst of it. This was the very blossom and beauty of the world-power. But even so, Liph, Nebuchadnezzar needed to be told and the fact needed to be shown, that there is no power but of God; and that God will surely overthrow all power which raises itself up against Him."

"Then what did happen to the king?"

"A sort of madness, under which men fancy themselves transformed into some animal. It is called Lycanthropy."

"But how came they to let him live out of doors so and be wild?"

"They could not have hindered it, unless by force."

"Did they not drive him out? see verse 32."

"The 'they' in that verse is not men, my child; it refers, if to anybody, to some of those spirits who are the agents in bringing about human evil. 'They shall make thee to eat grass,' could not be said of men, but only of the bringers of the disease."

"How long was he so? Seven years?"

"We cannot say. There seems to be no warrant for interpreting 'seven times' to be seven years. Seven, as a symbolical number, is said to be specially connected with all the developmen's of the Kingdom of God; and the punish-

ment of Nebuchadnezzar was in vindication and assertion of that kingdom. It was long enough anyhow for his hair and nails to grow strong and coarse in his exposure to the weather. Days or weeks would not do ; months, are the lowest calculation possible. Then, after those months, his reason returned to him again ; his counsellors came about him ; things returned to their old order. Except that Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself and gave glory to the God of heaven ; and it seems he prospered all the rest of his time after that ; for ' excellent majesty was added ' to him."

" And Daniel kept his place, and the Jews had a good time."

" Jehoiachin was in prison still. However, no doubt your statement is more or less true."

" But what a long time seventy years is, Uncle Sam ! "

" In exile, yes. They rolled slowly on. The great king died B.C. 561. Evil-Merodach, his son, brought the captive Jewish prince out of prison, gave him honour, and put him in comfort. See the end of the Book of Kings. Jehoiachin was given the chief place among all the captive princes at the court of Babylon ; dressed in royal robes, and was furnished with abundant maintenance for himself and his servants. But after two years Evil-Merodach was murdered by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar, supposed to be the same as the Nergal-shar-ezer of Jer. xxxix. 3."

" Then what became of Jehoiachin ? "

" Probably he died before that ; since it is said he did eat bread before Evil-Merodach ' all the days of his life,' *his* life, not the king's."

" Well, go on, Uncle Sam. What did Neriglissar do ? "

" Not much. His reign was short, only between three and four years. His successor was a son who was very young and unfit for his place, and who was accordingly murdered after a few months ; beaten to death, history says. A man high in office, but no member of Nebuchadnezzar's family, was chosen for the vacant throne. His name was Nabonadius, or Labynetus. But now, children,

things were already preparing for the fulfilment of the Lord's promise to the Jews.

"Look on your maps. Up in the north-east beyond the Zagros range, do you see Media? and further south, towards the Gulf, there is Persia. Now the Medes were a hardy, bold, vigorous race, who had long ago in connection with the Babylonians thrown off, you remember, the Assyrian yoke, and destroyed Nineveh. With independence and strength, and under peaceable princes, they had grown luxurious; it is the universal way; and with luxury had come enervation. Three years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar, the Persians, who were until now subordinate to the Medes, but had kept their warlike simplicity and hardihood, rose up under Cyrus and assumed the headship, putting Media in the subordinate position. It is said that Cyrus married the Median king's daughter, and so came peacefully into the Median kingdom; it is said also that he did very hard fighting for it. I will not try to decide which is the truth; anyhow he got the kingdom; and the very close co-ordinate relation of the two races for long after certainly inclines one to think they had not begun their union by a waste of bloodshed. But whether the Median prince was still living or was slain, it is certain that Cyrus was the head of the combined army and virtual head of the state. With what eagerness must the Jews have caught up every sound of his name; for the Lord had said, 'He shall let go My captives.'"

"What did they hear about him?"

"I do not know how much, nor how soon; those were not the days of telegraph wires and railways. However, Nabonadius had not been long seated on the throne of Babylon, when Cyrus's name was brought before him by an embassy from Sardis."

"Where is Sardis?"

"Why don't you know Sardis?" exclaimed Liph. "In Asia Minor?"

"And at that time capital of a great monarchy—one that had divided the empire of Asia with Media and Babylonia.

That was the kingdom of Lydia, Tiny ; it occupied the western half of Asia Minor ; and was rich and luxurious and powerful. Just now it was in its prime, under Croesus ; and from Croesus and Sardis came the embassy we are speaking about. Croesus had heard of the Persian revolt and revolution ; had heard that the new Persian prince, who had come into possession of the riches and power of his old ally Media, was vigorous and warlike and to be dreaded. Without delay he sent off an embassy to Egypt and another to Babylon, to propose that they should join forces against the new danger. The proposition was accepted by both ; and it follows almost of necessity that men's minds in Babylonia must have been very much exercised about Cyrus, and what he was doing, or likely to do."

"Was that why he came against Babylon?"

"Not at first. He went against Lydia ; and Nabonadius set about making his preparations and strengthening his fortifications. The Euphrates, you know, ran through the city. Nabonadius built a brick dam or embankment on both banks all along its course ; at the top of the dam a high wall, and in the wall at intervals placed gates of bronze. Then he thought himself absolutely secure. The territory within the walls was sufficient for the support of the inhabitants ; he could neither be forced out nor starved out."

. "What became of Lydia?"

"One of the three ribs in the mouth of the bear which Daniel saw in his vision."

"O Uncle Sam ! what is that ? you did not tell us that."

"Daniel saw a vision in which successive forms of the world-power were shown him under the likeness of various beasts. It is in the 7th chapter. The first, a lion, represented the Babylonish kingdom. The second, a bear, was the Persian. It had three ribs in its mouth, which are the three kingdoms it crushed and devoured. Lydia was one of the ribs."

"The two others?"

"Babylonia and Egypt."

"So Cræsus gained nothing by his alliances."

"Nothing. Lydia was conquered and Sardis taken. Cyrus did not then turn his attention to Babylon; he went to subdue the various tribes of Central Asia, between the Caspian Sea and the Indus; and fourteen years passed away before he finally found leisure to grapple with his great southern enemy. He came against Babylon about B.C. 539. During that year, however, he employed his soldiers in handling the spade. So the story is; that one of the sacred white horses was drowned in crossing a river; that Cyrus thereupon made a stop in his progress until he should punish the river for its audacity; and set his men to digging hundreds of channels for the water, whereby the river bed was drained and emptied. Whether he had laid his plan and wanted practice in order to gain the requisite skill for executing it, I cannot tell; at any-rate, in this way the year was spent; the army wintered in a mild climate, and only with the spring set out once more for Babylon."

"That is a very odd story to be told of such a man as Cyrus," said Dan.

"It is explicable, on the supposition I have mentioned. Quite explicable; for when Cyrus came to besiege the city it was found proof against attack. The defences were so good, and the management within so capable, that the Persian conqueror at last despaired of gaining the place in any ordinary way. But now we must go into the city and take a view from the interior. Nabonadius was not there now but his son Belshazzar."

"Ah, that is Daniel's Belshazzar!" I cried, "I was waiting to hear of him. Where was Nabonadius then? killed?"

"No; safe in Borsippa. When Cyrus first came into the country Nabonadius had met him with an army, fought and been defeated; and for some reason or other had taken refuge with the remains of his force in Borsippa, not in Babylon. Perhaps he feared the conqueror would come in

with him, if the gates were opened. Some little time before this, as soon I suppose as the boy was old enough, he had joined his son Belshazzar with him in the government ; and now Belshazzar ruled in Babylon and conducted the defence of the city."

"I thought Belshazzar was Nebuchadnezzar's son?"

"Grandson ; the same thing in Bible language. It seems that Nabonadius had married a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar."

"So that is the situation," said Dan. "Now I know where we are."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DELIVERED.

"Is it the fifth chapter of Daniel now?" I asked.

"That is the place. Now let us first get the situation. It was near the end of the seventy years. Cyrus had invaded Babylonia with his army. Nabonadius had met and fought him, been beaten, and obliged to throw himself into Borsippa, some ten or twelve miles away. Cyrus had laid siege to the city, but its defences laughed at him, and we may suppose so did its defenders. The city could not be taken, they were persuaded. They were secure. And Cyrus himself seemed to give the matter almost up. He had drawn off with a large part of his forces, leaving enough to watch the place but not to endanger it. Babylon triumphed."

"How the Jews must have been between hope and fear!"

"Some of them. Many of the Jews had made their homes contentedly in Babylen by this time, and were not eager for change of any sort. But Daniel and Ezra and others like them must have been watching and praying in secret. The Babylonians were openly confident and exultant. During the years in which he had been preparing for Cyrus's coming, Nabonadius had laid up immense stores of food in the city; and probably a large portion of the people of the country had taken refuge within the walls; so there was no lack of anything, neither of men nor of food to feed them. And what could any known engines of war do with walls eighty feet thick and two hundred feet high? So Belshazzar, when a certain day came round, made a feast for his nobles and officers, and all the city likewise

revelled in careless security. It was probably a religious festival?"

"What does it mean, that he 'drank wine before the thousand'?"

"Just that. The king's table was somewhat apart and above the other tables at the feast; he drank wine in his guests' presence, before their eyes. And they drank; and the mirth and revelry grew 'fast and furious;' till the vain-glorious, foolish young king, getting heated with wine, could find no way wild enough to satisfy his wanton pride and arrogant boasting. He sent for the sacred golden vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had brought from the Temple at Jerusalem—and had them passed round to his princes and his wives of higher and lower degree, that they might drink from them."

"What for?"

"In outrageous, exulting pride, triumphing as he thought over the God to whose service these vessels belonged, and whose Temple and land Nebuchadnezzar had desolated. As they drank, don't you see, they praised their own gods."

"Were there many of these vessels?"

"Ezra names five thousand four hundred that he carried back."

"How could there be so many? What were they used for?"

"According to the Talmud, there were ninety-three in use every day, just about the morning and evening sacrifice. Other special occasions had their own special vessels; there were in all a vast number, larger and smaller. Some were used for catching the blood of the sacrifices; there were other smaller ones from which the blood was sprinkled on the altar; gold basins to catch the blood of lambs, the rabbis say, silver basins to catch the blood of bullocks. There were dishes in which salt was put, for salting the sacrifices; other vessels in which the meat offering was prepared; dishes for pouring out the drink offerings; dishes to carry coals from the great altar, when the priests went to burn incense; dishes for the incense; dishes for

the table of shew-bread. All these, or all which had been brought into Nebuchadnezzar's treasury, most sacred and for most sacred uses, were handled now in irreverent hands and put to common lips ; lips that even at the moment were praising Nebo and Bel. Then suddenly, the king's cup failed from his own lips, and his eyes stared at something he saw before him. You remember that in Babylon, where stone was lacking, the palaces were not adorned like those of Assyria with wainscottings of sculptured alabaster. Here the building was of brick, and the walls were plastered, and painted with the gay scenes of war and hunting which in the northern palaces were more coldly set forth. Now, moving upon this plastered wall the king saw the fingers of a hand ; a hand the arm of which was not visible ; and under the fingers letters grew, traced upon the plaster, till a line of them ran along the wall. Unknown letters, unknown words, but the terrible hand wrote them and vanished, and there they were. The revelry died away, for when the king is serious, courtiers may not laugh, and all eyes gradually were drawn to the writing ; a hush came upon the noisy assembly ; the golden goblets of the Temple were set down from the bold hands that had held them ; and all eyes were fixed either on the strange letters on the wall, or on the king ; for the king had changed colour and his knees shook under him. The next thing was a cry for the Chaldæans, that they should come and tell what this meant. Do you know, children, what it meant ? Do you know what was going on at this minute around the city ?

"I have a general notion," said Dan. "Cyrus was there, wasn't he ?"

"You remember, Cyrus had withdrawn to a distance, and nobody knew what he was about. He had gone to a point upon the Euphrates higher up, from whence he made his men cut a channel or channels wide enough and deep enough to drain off all the waters of the river."

"Where should the waters go ?"

"To some point below the city where they would re-enter the channel. What he wanted, was to lay bare the river

bed at Babylon. It would appear that he knew of the festival held that night in the city, and timed his operations accordingly ; trusting that in the general jollification the watch of the river gates would be neglected. It has been supposed, therefore, that the occasion was a religious and popular festival, of which Cyrus had knowledge ; for even for him it would have been a little too risky to trust to Babylonian carelessness in an ordinary night. However that were, he had chosen this night, he had cut the openings from the river into the channels he had prepared, the river had poured its floods along the new ways ; the old channel was emptying fast ; and now Cyrus and his Persians and Medes were waiting outside the city, watching the waters falling from the old bed. As soon as the bed was dry they would march in, and take their chance of finding the river gates unguarded. And now it was, while the waters were rapidly draining off and Cyrus and his bands were making ready to march in, that the fingers of the hand came out on the wall and wrote,—MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN."

"Uncle Sam, why could not the wise men read the writing?"

"I do not know. Probably the character was unknown to them."

"Then it was not Hebrew?"

"Surely not. They knew Hebrew."

"Then how could Daniel tell what it was?"

"As he told the dream he had not dreamt. God gave it to him."

"I suppose Daniel was glad," said Dan. "*He* must have known that Cyrus was coming."

"He knew he was promised. He did not know he was before the walls at that minute."

"I do not see what was the inducement of a scarlet robe. It was offered to the wise men and offered to Daniel. They were not children."

"It was simply a robe worn by persons of high rank in the state. The robe meant the rank. So with the gold

chain. A gold chain was even sometimes a gift of honour from one king to another."

"Sir," said Liph, "it says, the queen came into the banqueting house 'by reason of the words of the king and his lords.' If she was not there, how could she hear them?"

"Easily, if you will take into account the open, southern style of building and the great confusion that began to prevail. The Chaldeans had been called in, had been obliged to declare they could do nothing; had been questioned, and bribed, and had answered; debates and conjectures and forebodings of evil were filling the wide hall; and then the queen came in. She was the queen mother; the wife of Nabonadius, and the daughter, as is supposed, of Nebuchadnezzar. She heard the uproar, not of revelry, and came in. She counselled her son to send for Daniel. It appears that Daniel no longer now held his high post of chief of the Chaldeans; for Belshazzar did not know him, though he knew of him. You can imagine now the hush of expectation and the breathless stillness in the assembly, when Daniel appeared; and when Daniel set before the king his crime of which he had been guilty, and vindicated the honour of the God whom Belshazzar had offended. Then came the interpretation of the writing on the wall. And at that very minute perhaps, the Persian men-at-arms were defiling into the river bed, and stealing along under cover of the darkness to get into the city. They must have come warily and doubtfully; if any sentinel was awake to give the alarm, they would be in a terrible position, hemmed in between the two river walls and unable to fight or flee. But the Babylonians were feasting and secure; nobody was on the outlook; the Persians found the river gates unwatched and unguarded; and they came in. Look back to Jeremiah li. 32-34, for a description of the night. The inhabitants, taken by surprise, 'became as women;' they had 'remained in their holds' and thought themselves secure, but 'her bars are broken.' Messenger after messenger ran to warn the king that his city was 'taken at

one end,' that the passages were occupied with armed men, and that the soldiers had lost heart. It was too late then to do anything. 'In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain ;' the Babylonian empire came to an end."

"I thought Cyrus was the conqueror."

"Right. So he was."

"Then how was it that Darius the Mede took the kingdom?"

"Simply because Cyrus gave it to him ; put him over it. The word translated 'took,' has not the meaning of a forcible seizure, by use of one's own power ; but simply 'receiving ;' taking what is given. Darius is the Persian title, which was given to the Median Cyaxares. He ruled in Babylon, under Cyrus or with Cyrus, for two years ; then Cyrus became sole ruler. The Greek historian Xenophon says that Cyaxares gave his daughter to Cyrus and with her the kingdom of Media, as he had no son. So just at that time the joint kingdom is spoken of as 'the Medes and Persians ;' later, the style is altered and becomes 'the Persians and Medes.'"

"Did Cyrus destroy Babylon at that time?"

"Neither at that time, nor at any other."

"I thought Babylon was to be destroyed."

"It was to be destroyed ; but not by Cyrus."

"When then?"

"Not all at once ; by degrees, on successive occasions, under different conquerors. We shall have more to say about it perhaps by and by. In the meantime we have to do with Darius the Mede."

"Don't you suppose the Jews were bitterly disappointed, that after all the coming of Cyrus, Babylon still stood, and they had just exchanged one king for another? And where was Cyrus? I thought he was to set the Jews free?"

"So he was, but the time was not come."

"It was almost come."

"That question began to exercise Daniel, as we shall see. But first we must read the 6th chapter. Here again was a

grand occasion on which the Lord, as it were, came out from His hiding-place, and showed His might and His majesty in the eyes of all the peoples ; comforted His servants, and confounded the pride of the world-power. For as Daniel was the second man in the kingdom, what befel him at this time must have been told wherever the empire of the Medes and Persians extended ; and so the way was preparing for the Lord's kingdom, in bringing the heathen to look with awe and respect to the Power which could do such things."

"How came Daniel to take such a high post again ? What did Darius know about him ?"

"Probably, that he had just foretold Belshazzar's downfall and the uprising of the Medo-Persian rule. Then, boys, as soon as Daniel was proved, by anybody, it began to be found that an 'excellent spirit was in him ;' that he was gifted with an extraordinary calm wisdom, and was of an absolutely incorruptible truth and loyalty. He was a servant that any prince might be glad of ; and accordingly Darius set him over the whole realm, that the noblest and the highest should make their reports to him ; even to this captive foreigner. It is very natural that they wanted to pull him down from his high place, where it is likely he was very inconvenient to them."

"If Darius liked him so much, how came he to make that order ?"

"It is just like an indolent, easy-going, facile-proud king, to do it. He did not think of Daniel. The proposition made by his courtiers was flattering, and he simply fell into their trap."

"Well, there is another question. Could not the laws of the Medes and Persians be changed ?"

"No. The king was looked upon as a sort of embodiment of their divinity, Ormuzd, so his decrees must be faultless and unalterable."

"Infallible !" cried Dan.

"Even so. It is according to a general idea of heathendom, which makes the king the representative of the gods. So Pharaoh was just Phrah—the Sun ; and portrayed in



IN THE LIONS' DEN.

the monuments as the equal of the gods. The edict in question demanded public recognition of Darius in this capacity, from his own and all conquered nations. So you see, here as in Nebuchadnezzar's time, the world-power rose up against the claims of God and demanded the honour which belongs to Him only."

The boys looked puzzled; then Liph remarked that he "did not see why Daniel must have his windows open."

"What is hidden loyalty worth?"

"What good did it do?"

"Do you ask me that? In Daniel the honour of God was upheld against the demands of the world-power; first by His servant's faithfulness, and then by the magnificent deliverance granted him; and all the world knew it, and it is good for all the world to-day."

"I don't see why his windows should be open towards Jerusalem," said Dan.

"See 1 Kings viii. 44. In Jerusalem had been the place where God manifested Himself to His people and met with them. Unable to get to the spot, the children of God in distant lands still looked towards it when they sought Him. It was the look of faith."

"But Daniel could not know that God would deliver him from the lions; and if they had killed him, then the Jews would have lost his support and help."

"That is very shortsighted, Liph. If *he* had lost the favour of God, how long would his power to help have lasted? And supposing he had escaped the lions by unfaithfulness, his enemies would have taken some other mode of attack in which they would have been more successful."

"Darius was a poor sort of a king!" Dan burst forth.

"In letting such a decree be drawn from him. But when it was made, he could not alter it without loosening all the joints of the body politic."

"But what sort of a place could a den of lions be, which could be closed up by a stone?"

"Perhaps we can get at some light upon that. It is

related that in Morocco lions' dens are arranged in this manner. A large subterranean cavity is dug, or hewn, and divided in two by a partition wall. In the partition wall is a door, which can be opened from above. The keeper opens the door, throws food down into the one side, which then attracts all the beasts out from the other side ; then closing the door, he can descend to clean the half of the den. At the top the den is open, a wall of several feet in height running all round it ; and there was an opening also in the side, by which lions were brought in or taken out ; and by which the keeper went in. This was the 'mouth' of the den. This opening was the one covered with the stone, upon which the clay seal was affixed. Daniel might be thrown in from above, over the wall."

"The king cared a great deal about him," said Priscilla.

"A great deal ; for an Oriental selfish despot. Very early in the morning, after a sleepless night, he went to the den and called to Daniel over the wall. He had heard so much of Daniel's history, and the favour of God in which he was held, that he had a sort of despairing hope he might yet be found alive ; in spite of the lions."

"Uncle Sam, what sort of a night must Daniel have spent ?"

"What sort do you think ?"

"Why, dreadful ; not knowing every minute but the lions would spring upon him."

"I suppose he was on his watch all the while," said Liph ; "and that is hard to keep up."

"Children, you don't know. I reckon it was one of the grandest nights in all Daniel's life. You forget what he said to the king : 'My God hath sent His angel and hath shut the lions' mouths ;'—what do you think of that for company ? and what do you think of that for an experience of the love and care of his God ? And you can see the calm, happy, collected state of mind in which the morning found him. When the king looked over the wall and cried to him 'with a lamentable voice,' Daniel responded with the *usual courtly form of civility*—'O king, live for ever.'"

"And then this was published, the whole story, in all the kingdoms of the Persian empire."

"And so the way prepared for the hearing of the truth which the Jews had to tell, and for the expectation of the coming Deliverer. So the honour and glory of the only true God was maintained in the face of the utmost pretension of the world-power."

"And Daniel prospered, through that reign and when Cyrus came to the throne. But don't you suppose he and the Jews began to look hard for deliverance now?"

"We know he did. Turn to the ninth chapter of Daniel. When Belshazzar was slain, and the Medes and Persians took the kingdom, and so the first world-empire of Nebuchadnezzar's vision gave place to the second,—the head of gold to the breast and arms of silver; and moreover, Cyrus was the conqueror and virtual ruler; Daniel's heart began to be greatly stirred. He studied the 'books,' the writings of Jeremiah especially, wherein he found the term of the Captivity set down at seventy years. He calculated and found that the seventy years were nearly up. Forty-four years and three months of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, two years of Evil-Merodach, four years of Neriglissar, Laboroso-arehod nine months, Nabonedus seventeen years—that makes sixty-eight. Now in the first year of Darius, which would be the sixty-ninth, the time of the end of the Captivity was very near; and Daniel became greatly exercised about it. When should the seventy years end? when did they begin? and was the time now, when God would fulfil His promise? He set himself to seek the promise by importunate prayer. Read the ninth chapter."

"If the promise was for the end of the seventy years," said Liph, "I do not see why Daniel need have given himself so much trouble. If it was to be seventy years, it would be seventy years."

"Yes. But look at Jeremiah xxix. 10-13. See, my boy, it is the Lord's way to do what He will do, and even what He has promised to do, in answer to believing prayer. He chooses that His children should ask

Him. He has chosen that prayer should be the hinge on which all His government turns. He has promised, but we must take the promise and bring it before Him and make it our argument. Daniel understood this, and did accordingly. And then, he got a great deal more than he asked for, as is usual. When he began to pray, one of the great angels was commissioned to go to him and explain to him all about the term of the further deliverance which was also promised, and to come, but of which the deliverance and the return under Cyrus were but the faint earnest and type,—not the realisation. It is likely enough that Daniel in his mind was confounding the two things, the near and the remote ; and hoping that Cyrus would accomplish that uttermost deliverance which Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel had foretold. They spoke of the near and the far in one prophetic vision, which did not declare,—probably did not understand or discern clearly,—the distance and the division between them. Gabriel came now to explain to Daniel what neither he nor any other before him had seen ; the time, the coming, the detail work, of the true Messiah.”

“Did Daniel understand?”

“My child, I cannot tell how much. We have the fulfilment of the prophecy to help us ; before the fulfilment it must have seemed, like many another prophecy, most strange and unlikely and incongruous.”

“I do not understand it now, Uncle Sam.”

“Let us see, if we can, what was promised. There was to be a time of numbered years, seventy weeks of them, before the deliverance, the great deliverance, should come. ‘Seventy seven-times ;’ how much is that?”

“Four hundred and ninety years.”

“How do you know that it was not four hundred and ninety days?” said Liph.

“You will see yourself that it could not be. This term of seventy weeks of years is in the 25th and 27th verses divided into three portions ; seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week ; that makes ?”——

"Seventy, of course," said Dan; "but why was it so divided?"

"To point and define the prophecy of what was to take place. But what was to take place? Look at the words, and tell me what you think Daniel would have made of them."

"The time is clear," said Dan slowly. "Then it is promised that at the end of it 'Messiah the Prince' would come; so it was certain he was not to be Cyrus. Jerusalem was to be built; the Messiah was to be cut off; the city and Temple would be destroyed by a foreign army; sacrifice would cease; of course with the destruction of the Temple it *must* cease; and apparently the city would lie desolate for a long time. It is strange! The prophecy is that Jerusalem would be built, and next thing, that it would be terribly destroyed. The Messiah would come, and then be cut off! I do not see how Daniel could have made out anything clear."

"What was the Messiah to do?"

"I do not understand. 'To finish the transgression'—what, or whose?"

"Not the Jews," said Priscilla; "for theirs became worse and worse."

"Look at Heb. x. 12-18, and tell me if you make anything of that."

"Why, yes!" said Dan, after he had attentively considered it. "Is *that* the way He was going to 'finish the transgression'? Oh, that's beautiful."

"And 'cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease'?" said I. "'Where remission of these is, *there is no more offering for sin.*'"

"Both ways He made sacrifice to cease, but this is the first designated. Go on, Dan."

"He was to 'make reconciliation for iniquity,'" Dan went on in the same considerative way. "That is, I suppose, a real reconciliation; a real atonement; what the sacrifices could not do. Would Daniel understand that?"

"The fact undoubtedly; probably not the manner of it."

"He would 'bring in everlasting righteousness'—I do not just know what that is."

"By the works of the law, you know, nobody is justified ; that is, approved righteous, or declared righteous, under the law. But by faith in Christ we come into His righteousness and are covered by it ; and it is all as one as if *we* had been righteous ourselves. It is 'the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.' And that is everlasting righteousness. It will never grow old nor lose its splendour."

"Then it don't signify what a man is himself?" said Liph.

"It signifies in this way ; that 'whom He justified, them He also glorified.' If a man is unwilling to be glorified, he will not, and he cannot, trust in Christ with that heart surrender which brings him into Christ's salvation."

"I suppose everybody would be willing to be glorified," said Liph.

"By no means, when the glorification is to begin with making him like Christ. 'Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.' Go on, Dan."

"Vision and prophecy were to be 'sealed up,' at the end of that time. Does that mean they were to cease?"

"This word of 'sealing,' in the Bible, means one thing or another according to circumstances. It means, in 'sealing up sins'—for that is the word here—that they would be made an end of, hidden. Sealing vision and prophecy may mean, on the other hand, to authenticate. They were to be in this way, *sealed*, by having their sayings verified and matched with the fact."

"And 'to anoint the Most Holy.' I know, I believe, what that means. But Daniel could not know?"

"Better, perhaps, than you think. Anointing was the solemn ceremony of sealing the king, or the high priest, for his office. The king was thereafter 'the Lord's Anointed ;' the chosen and accredited vicegerent of the Great King. *Daniel* would comprehend that allusion. Besides, the pro-

phesias of Isaiah were known to him. See the 61st chapter, at the beginning. But it is from this word delivered to Daniel, that the 'Messiah,' the 'Anointed,' the 'Christ,' became the special name for the Great Deliverer, by which Jews and Gentiles know Him, and under which they expected Him."

"At the end of seventy weeks," said I.

"What seventy weeks?" said Liph.

"A seventy weeks made up of three portions; respectively seven, sixty-two, and one. It was to begin 'from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem.' Now when was such a commandment issued?"

"By Cyrus, the first year of his reign," said Liph.

"Look at the record and see. Read Ezra i. 1-4, and vi. 3-5."

"This is an order to build the Temple," said Dan. "There is nothing about Jerusalem."

"The next order or decree of the kind was the one made by Darius Hystaspes, recorded also in the 6th chapter of Ezra. That regarded the Temple merely; it was a renewal of the decree of Cyrus, which the Jews had been hindered from carrying out. But the next are two decrees of Artaxerxes, one in his seventh and one in his twentieth year; the first giving Ezra permission to go to Jerusalem with as many as chose to accompany him, 'to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of his God,' to better and put in order the service of the Temple, to 'set magistrates and judges,' and restore the polity of the nation in all its details. The decree in the twentieth year of that king went further, and specially empowered Nehemiah to restore the wall and building of the city. Both decrees were decrees 'to restore,' the second specially 'to build; and from the first of these there were just four hundred and ninety years to the year A.D. 33."

The boys studied, and I begged to know the meaning of the "seven weeks."

"Seven weeks are forty-nine years. It was in and during those forty-nine years that the city was rebuilt, 'and

troublesome times,' for the Jews were greatly hindered and interfered with. Then came the sixty-two weeks, or four hundred and thirty-four years. Those were the years of waiting for the Messiah, and at the end of them He came ; the end of them falls just at the time of His baptism and entrance upon His public ministry. One week of the seventy is left. In the midst of that week, that is, in three and a half years, Messiah was 'cut off'—*after* the sixty-two weeks. In the midst of the last seven weeks He made sacrifice and oblation to cease, by the sacrifice of Himself, sealed vision and prophecy, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The words, 'but not for Himself,' are not considered a right translation ; the words rather mean—'and there shall not be to Him.' *What* shall not be to Him, is not said distinctly ; but the fact is, that His people disowned Him and failed Him. Upon that, as you know, a few years later, followed the coming of Titus with his Romans, the destruction of Temple and city, and its utter desolation."

"I understand it, Uncle Sam ; but it must have made Daniel very sad if *he* understood it."

"Daniel had other revelations also, and knew that the end of all would be the Messiah's triumph. We will talk a little of that next time."

CHAPTER VII.

THE WORLD POWER.

THE rains had begun. The following evening we were obliged to gather into one of our tents. Close quarters ! yet I thought it was very pleasant indeed. Through the open door of the tent we could still look over to Jerusalem, through the veil of rain, and see the outline of the hills ; and the air was sweet, though we wrapped ourselves in shawls. For Uncle Sam had made no preparations yet for returning to New York, and we talked of passing the winter in Palestine. Now we sat in our tent and studied Daniel's vision and the four world-empires ; and I shall never read that chapter again without a certain lovely remembrance of the sound of the rain upon our tent roof, and the smell of it in the air ; and yet another association, which I will tell of by and by.

"We are going back a little," Dan remarked. "This vision Daniel had in the first year of Belshazzar ; two years or so before Babylon was taken."

"Just when the Babylonish empire was crumbling, and Daniel knew it was crumbling. Now the Lord gave him a view of the successive developments of the world-power which were to follow each other, and then of the triumph of the Kingdom of God over them all. He thought he saw first a great sea, tossed and tumultuous under contrary winds. The sea, in Bible figures, stands for the wild, mighty, untamed, unregulated passions of men. Out of these conflicting surges of human passion, he saw four forms of power arise, one after the other. The first, like a lion, with eagle's wings, that is the Babylonish kingdom ; the same with the head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. See Jer. iv. 7, 13 ; and i. 17 ; and Ezek. xvii. 3 ; where Nebuchadnezzar

is likened to a lion and to an eagle, for his royal might and supremacy, and swift conquering progress."

"But its wings were plucked," said Liph. "When?"

"When Nebuchadnezzar lost his reason, certainly the royal flight of his power was no longer. I am not sure that I know what these words mean. I do not know how much is intended by the saying that the kingdom was humanised and made less brutal than its first condition had been. Of the latter part of Nebuchadnezzar's reign we know nothing. The second beast answers to the breast and arms of silver in the king's dream."

"Raised itself up on one side"—said Dan.

"Was unequal, one half of it being stronger and more prominent than the other."

"The Medes and Persians."

"Of whom the Persians were the dominant half. The empire was of a joint race; but the Persians got and held the upper hand, till the style ran, 'The Persians and Medes.'"

"And what are these three ribs in its mouth?"

"Evidently three kingdoms devoured by its rapacity. Those three were the Lydian, the Babylonian, and the Egyptian."

"Were they all conquered by the Persians?"

"By the Medes and Persians."

"But the silver empire was to be inferior to the gold."

"So was in many things the Medo-Persian empire inferior to the Babylonian. Not perhaps in extent. It swallowed up nearly all the historical nations of its time. Its area of dominion was enormous. But it became, after Cyrus, an unwieldy, heavy power, without the animating soul which Cyrus was while he lived, and which Nebuchadnezzar was to the Babylonian empire. The Persian empire lacked unity, lacked organization. The provinces were for ever raising rebellion in one quarter or another; the central government counted on the jealousies and mutual intrigues of the satraps against one another, as a security for itself. It did no noble things, as Nebuchadnezzar did so many.

It only sucked the riches of the provinces, supplied itself from them with men and money as wanted, and lived in most inglorious and indolent luxury and pleasure-taking. Cyrus was nearly the reverse of all this, but Cyrus, great conqueror as he was, did nothing for his own people or the peoples he subdued ; he left no monuments of beneficence or grandeur behind him. And his successors were very greatly his inferiors in every way."

"Then came a leopard."

"Or panther ; with four wings. There you have the image of strength and power, and of swift, irresistible progress again, taking its prey at a leap. So was Alexander."

"Alexander !" said Dan. "But that answers to the brazen part of Nebuchadnezzar's image. Was his empire inferior to the Persian ? Brass is meaner than silver."

"It is not said that the third kingdom would be inferior to the second ; and most certainly the fourth was not inferior to the third ; yet iron is meaner than brass, Dan. No ; there may be some allusion to the different internal characters of these empires, in the more or less of elegance and richness in the nature and habits of the ruling races. The Persian was not magnificent like the Babylonian, but it was luxurious to a ruinous degree. In comparison with the state of the Persian kings, Alexander's court might be likened to brass as compared with silver. But he had the nerve and muscle and swift progress of the panther, for all that."

"Four heads ?" said Dan.

"The four heads belong to the empire, not to its founder. Alexander died young ; and after him grew up the four divisions of his great kingdom, under Ptolemy, Antigonus, Lysimachus, and Cassander ; Egypt, Syria, Thrace, and Greece."

"The fourth beast had no shape that is told."

"It was to be unlike anything Daniel or the world knew. Its terribleness was better expressed by this indefiniteness. It could not be described ; only its 'great iron teeth' were unmistakeable."

"That beast is the Roman empire. That fits," said Dan. "That answers to the iron legs and feet of the image. But the ten horns? what are they?"

"They correspond with the ten toes of the image. The ten horns, according to the symbolism, must be ten kingdoms. But it is the same beast, notice. And ten is the symbolical number of 'definite completeness'—of utmost 'development and perfection.' In the history of this empire there are, it has been remarked, three periods. First, the time of its existence and sway before its ten horns came into flourishing. Next, the time of those ten horns. After them, the time of the little horn's flourishing, spoken of in the 8th verse."

"And what are all these horns? in history, I mean."

"I cannot tell you, for the simple reason that much of the prophecy is of things still future. In the Revelation there is more of it and in more detail, but of things still future. So we must wait till the time comes. Meanwhile you see that the fourth beast, like the legs of iron, represented a power less luxurious and magnificent, but far stronger, than the three which went before. The Roman rule extended pretty much over the known world, and held it in a firm grasp. Also we know how even that empire deteriorated, and the iron became mixed with clay. But now read on, from the 9th verse. Daniel gazed or continued gazing, for so the words mean; till he saw the judgment sit, which passed sentence upon this last tremendous world-power as it appeared then in its last development. And then he saw One like a man come with the clouds of heaven, and the dominion was given to Him; never to end, or change, or pass away."

"That is Christ," said I.

"But when did He do that?" said Priscilla. "When did He come and receive the kingdom? or has He not done it yet?"

"Is the world-power destroyed?" said my uncle. "Does Christ reign? No, He has not done it yet. But, children, see Luke xix. 12."

"'To receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return,'" said Prissy, reading. "When will He return?"

"See Psalm cx. 1. And then Matt. xxv. 31, and xxiv. 30."

"When, Uncle Sam?"

"My dear, we are not told. Only, the Lord promised to come 'quickly;' and foretold that it would be when people were not looking for Him. Whenever it shall be, then, children, the world-power will be broken and destroyed, and the everlasting kingdom of Christ will be set up in beauty and glory. That is what was shown to Daniel. He asked explanations about that fourth development of the world-power, which seemed so dreadful to him; and the explanations were given; and yet we cannot understand them, because they refer to what has not yet come to pass. But the end of the whole is clear; the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom. I think that Christ received the kingdom, in one sense, when He had finished His work on earth; when He said, 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.' And see John xii. 31. If the prince of this world was cast out, that must be by the might of another taking his kingdom. Nevertheless, we see not yet all things subdued under Christ; but the time is coming."

"And when He called Himself the 'Son of Man,' did He mean that He was this Son of Man spoken of here?"

"I have no doubt of it. None but He Himself ever ventured to give the name to Him. And the 'kingdom of heaven,' which He preached, and which John the Baptist said was at hand, means this kingdom which Daniel in vision saw set up over all the kingdoms of this earth. So in Matt. xxvi. 64. Caiaphas understood Jesus to assert that He was this divine person spoken of here; and so he cried blasphemy."

"I wish I could understand all this history in these visions," said Dan.

"Some of it, at least, is plain. You can study the 8th chapter at your leisure, where the second and third world kingdoms are spoken of at large under the figures of a ram -

with one horn higher than the other, and a he-goat with one beautiful horn between his eyes. The former is the Medo-Persian empire ; the latter is the Greek power under Alexander. The he-goat came from the west and ' touched not the ground ; ' so swift and easy was its conquering progress. So the Grecian power came with swift victory, and broke the Persian power all to pieces. Then after Alexander his kingdom was divided into four ; and from one of them came forth a little horn, little at first, which grew into a great persecutor of the Lord's people. That was Antiochus Epiphanes. And he stands for the Old Testament type of the hostile power which, under the New Testament name of Antichrist, shall make war so violently against the saints, just before the Lord comes. But to discuss that would take us too far. Come back to Daniel."

"Uncle Sam, when Daniel had these visions, what was the state of that third kingdom ? The Medes and Persians were ruling ; the ram ; where was that he-goat ?"

"In existence, but little dreamed of as yet by the ram. The beautiful horn between his eyes was not grown. Two hundred years must pass first, before Alexander would be king."

"And when he became king he destroyed the Persian empire ?"

"Utterly."

"How long after him was that wicked little horn, Antiochus Epiphanes ?"

"More than a hundred and fifty years."

"Why should all this be shown Daniel beforehand ?"

"Ay, it troubled him," said my uncle ; "it made him sick. But there were several reasons why it should be shown to him. To strengthen the people of God for what was coming, to confirm their faith in the God who foretelleth secrets, to prevent them from thinking that they were either forgotten or neglected by Him when the world-powers seemed to triumph and have everything their own way and to be trampling the Church down. Is it not good for us, as well as good

for them, to have this assurance that God knew all that was coming? and is it not a pledge to us that His plans shall yet throw over all human plans, and live, while theirs die?"

"Uncle Sam, where were the Romans now?"

"In Rome. A little before Nebuchadnezzar's death the first census was taken in the city of Rome, and gave less than a hundred thousand inhabitants. The kings were then reigning in Rome; the Republic, that terrible beast, was not yet in life."

"Then another thing. Did Daniel ever go back to Jerusalem?"

"Never."

"Did he want to go?"

"It would have been no use for him to want to go. Probably he was too important and useful to be spared by his despotic masters. He never went back."

"Then why did he care so much about the end of the seventy years of captivity?"

"Ah, children, he was a Jew! And to a true Jew, Jerusalem is dear, and her people, and her glory; dearer than his own interests. He cared, though he himself would never see it, and he was a fixture at the court of his imperial rulers. He cared all the same. He was not a selfish man."

"I suppose he had a pretty easy time of it where he was," said Liph.

"I do not know about that. The president of the presidents of the whole kingdom, supposing him to be an honest man, must not have had too easy a time, I should think. If you mean that he lived in wealth and luxury, there is no doubt he could do that as much as he pleased. The Median court had been for some time an exceedingly luxurious one. It is said, the nobles sometimes put golden bits in their horses' mouths. They wore robes of red and purple, with gold chains about their necks; and feasting and hunting and state ceremonials were on a superb scale. But Daniel, we know, was never led astray by this splendour of the world-power. Down to his old age he was a 'man greatly beloved,' at whose prayer angels were sent to speak to him."

The reign of Darius the Mede lasted, however, but two years, and then he died, and Cyrus became sole head of the kingdom."

"Then Cyrus sent the Jews back."

"Cyrus gave them leave to go."

"What made him?"

"The Lord did it, the Bible says. 'The Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia.' What means were used I do not know. The Jews may have petitioned; the attention of the king may have been called to the prophecies in their books, in which he was mentioned by name as the deliverer and restorer of Israel. Between the Persian religion and the Jewish there was at any rate a great sympathy, in that both of them abhorred images. The Babylonian idolatry was about as hateful to the Persians as to the captives. Bel had bowed, and Nebo stooped, when they came in."

"And, seeing that, the Jews must have felt sure and glad; sure that all the rest would come true. And then how impatient they must have been, those two years."

"Eager, yes, and impatient. Zerubbabel must have waited and prayed, and Ezra, and many another. But we cannot begin upon Ezra's history to-night, children."

It had happened, that as we sat talking, the rain which for three days had continued steady, ceased, and the clouds broke; and over Jerusalem and her hills there broke from the west the loveliest light of golden radiance. Coming from under the clouds, it came like a glory. That is the other association bound up with this afternoon's reading. It was to me like the sign of the promised rise of the kingdom; light after darkness, sunshine after storm. I know the time of Messiah's coming is called the "morning" rather than any other time; nevertheless, I saw the golden glitter on Jerusalem and the golden shine on the hills that evening, and I thought, so shall it be at the end of the days!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RETURN UNDER CYRUS.

THE next evening it was still clear, though cold ; and Uncle Sam began to talk of removing us into a house in Jerusalem until the turn of the spring. Perhaps we must do that ; however, for to-day I was glad we were still where we could look out upon the city, and imagine the scene when no city was there. It all lay waste and desolate, left to the jackals ; heaps of rubbish, bare places that had been places of ashes, a levelled and barren area where the Temple courts and buildings had been beautiful ; where the cypresses grew now in the courts of the Mosque of Omar. We opened our Bibles at the first chapter of Ezra.

"Cyrus published his proclamation 'throughout all his kingdom ;' does that mean his whole empire ?" Priscilla asked.

"Undoubtedly. Cyrus was master of all Asia, at least of all historical Asia ; and wherever he was master his heralds made this proclamation."

"And did the Jews everywhere act upon the permission given them ?"

"It does not appear that they did. It would seem that the Israelites taken to Assyria and Media had mingled themselves so thoroughly with the heathen around them that national hopes and aspirations were swallowed up. The ten tribes are lost to history. Children, even from the Jews in Babylonia, only a little handful, as it were, took advantage of the king's proclamation ; not forty-three thousand went back with Zerubbabel."

"Isn't that very strange, Uncle Sam ?"

"According to human nature, no. Remember, there had been time enough for the Jewish exiles to settle down and

make themselves homes in the rich country of their captivity. They had entered into business, they had gone into trade and manufacture ; they were growing rich, they were living in ease ; some of them were probably employed as servants of the king, which would be very natural with a Jew holding the first office in the realm. What was there to induce them to go back to their own land ? A long journey ; a place of desolated homes at the end of the journey ; waste country ; demolished houses and towns ; ruined farms. Months of hard and discouraging work must be gone through before things could be better ; ease and comfort and profit would be left behind and out of sight."

"Then what *did* they go for ?" said Liph.

Uncle Sam was silent.

"Why," said Dan, "there were the promises."

"Of what ?"

"Promises of the kingdom of heaven. Oh now I see why all those visions and explanations of visions were given to Daniel, besides the sayings of the old prophets ; to Daniel and to Ezekiel ; the people must have needed them all to keep up their strength and courage."

"Why couldn't they stay in Babylon and wait for it ?"

"They would be merged in Babylon, and lost with the fall of Babylon. Don't you know, the people of God were, and are, warned against that very danger ?"

"Are, Uncle Sam ?"

"Are, my child. Babylon was the culmination of the world-power of that day ; and Babylon is used by the prophets as the significant name for the same power in after times and different development. So the command runs to us to flee out of her. See Isa. xlviii. 20 ; Jer. i. 8 ; li. 6, 9, 45 ; Zech. ii. 6, 7."

"These all refer to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon, sir, I should think."

"Primarily, but also as the type of the other. See 2 Cor. vi. 17 ; Rev. xviii. 4. Babylon means the world-power."

"I should think the Jews *then* would have minded this

order," said I. "Why, they knew that Babylon was to be destroyed ; they were eager for it."

"Personal interest, personal ease, had come in since then to work a change in their feeling. The Jews generally had lost their own language and spoke Aramaic now ; they had changed their yearly reckoning and names of the months, making the year begin in autumn, as the Babylonians did ; what wonder that with another language and another calendar had come a closer bond to their new home than to their old ? 'No man can serve two masters,' Tiny ; 'either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.' However, there were forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty men who were minded to go home with Zerubbabel ; and women and children would swell the numbers to something considerable."

"A handful after all," said Dan. "Who was Zerubbabel ?"

"The prince of the tribe of Judah. The present representative of the house of David, though not in the line of Solomon. He is named in the lists as the son of Jeconiah, only in the sense of being the heir and successor to his royal dignity. He was born in Babylon, and was one of the noble and the true of Hebrew history. With him was Jeshua, or Joshua, the high priest. Under them were two who had later a great part to play ; Haggai and Zechariah ; it does not appear that they had come into prominence at this time."

"Ezra did not go."

"Not with these first returning. Truly Ezra was not born yet. It was seventy-five years later than this when he came to Jerusalem."

"Uncle Sam, in his proclamation did Cyrus mean the God of the Jews, or his own god, who had charged him to build the Temple at Jerusalem ?"

"The proclamation mentions the name of Jehovah in the Hebrew translation, and there is no doubt but it did in the original decree. Cyrus found Daniel in the first official

place in the kingdom ; he would naturally learn his history and become personally acquainted with him ; and also naturally Daniel would tell the king what stood written about him in the Hebrew books for two hundred years past ; perhaps he would sue to him to make the prophecy good. Which the king did anyhow ; gave permission to all the Jews to return home ; commanded them to rebuild the Temple ; directed that every facility should be given them and every help they needed, in goods and money ; and finally restored into their hands the precious deposit of the gold and silver vessels belonging to the Temple, which Belshazzar had desecrated."

"I should rather think Cyrus would have liked to get those vessels away, out of his keeping," said Priscilla. - "Who is this Sheshbazzar?"

"Zerubbabel's Babylonish name."

"I'd have kept it," said Liph. "It sounds better than the other. Now come lists and lists. We need not read those."

"No ; and yet there are certain matters of interest connected with them. First come lists of the families of the people, from verse 3 to verse 35. Down to verse 19 the names are names of families or houses ; then come names of towns, with exception again of verses 30-32. It is interesting to see that men of Gibeon went home (it is called Gibbar in the text), men of Bethlehem, men of Anathoth, Kirjath-arim, Beeroth, Ramah and Geba, Michmas, Bethel and Ai and Jericho. A few returning stragglers they were. See, one hundred and twenty-three men going back to Bethlehem ; one hundred and twenty-two to Michmas ; two hundred and twenty-three to Bethel and Ai ; ninety-five only to Gibeon, one hundred and twenty-eight to Anathoth. Little companies, seeking the farms and fields of their forefathers, but only to find ruined homesteads, broken terraces, and fallow ground. They had kept their genealogical lists, so they knew who was who, and just where everybody's right was. Of the whole of them there were only twenty thousand or twenty-five thousand men."

"It speaks for the attractions of Babylon," said Dan.

"Next in order come the lists of the priests. Only four of the twenty-four courses are represented; a little over four thousand men in all. Of Levites much fewer. Indeed, of the first class of Levites, the regular helpers of the priests, there were but seventy-four; of the singers, one hundred and twenty-eight; of the door-keepers, one hundred and thirty-nine."

"Four out of twenty-four," said Dan. "Then come the Nethinims. Who were the Nethinims?"

"Do you remember the story of the Gibeonites, who cheated Joshua into a treaty of alliance, and whom Joshua made hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Temple service? These were their descendants. As many of them went back as of all the Levites."

"Then here are 'servants of Solomon,' in the 55th verse."

"They must probably have been children of other bondmen whom Solomon reduced to captivity. Also the children of Mehunim and of Nephusim, in verse 50, belonged to other races, but are reckoned with the rest of the Nethinims."

"Then here come six hundred and fifty-two poor people who could not show their register. What would be done with them?"

"They might go to Judæa, but they were not reckoned among the people. Even so with three families of priests, whose genealogy was lost; they might not serve in the priests' office nor eat of the holy things."

"Who was this Tirshatha?"

"Zerubbabel. Cyrus had made him governor. Tirshatha is the Persian title."

"He said they must not eat of the holy things *until there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim?*"

"To find out the Lord's will on the matter. That time never came. In the original institution of the priest's office, do you not recollect the ephod with the breastplate, which the high priest put on when he would ask a question of the Lord for all Israel, or for the king?"

"I remember, partly."

"In the breastplate were twelve precious stones bearing the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The high priest stood with his breastplate on, as the representative of the people; and questions that he asked of God then were answered. How, I cannot tell; whether by an audible voice, or by some peculiar scintillation of the stones, which I think less likely. See Exod. xxviii. 30; Num. xxvii. 21; 1 Sam. xxiii. 9-12; xxx. 7, 8."

"And why would that time never come again?"

"The Lord had forsaken His Temple. His presence was visible there no more. The theocracy was at an end, and the privileges of the theocracy."

"Did the Tirshatha know that?"

"Evidently he did not know it. I suppose he hoped things would be as they had been, once get the Temple built and the worship restored."

"I think it is a sorrowful story altogether, Uncle Sam. Who are these singing men and women, in verse 65?"

"Hired musicians, employed largely both in times of iollity and of mourning."

"Horses, mules, camels, and asses; beasts of burden. How long would the journey take them?"

"It took Ezra and his company four months. Less would not do for so large a caravan. The way is long, and ten or twelve miles a day is good progress. In course of time, though I cannot say at what season of the year, the returning exiles came to the place of the home of their fathers; to the heaps of rubbish and broken walls which covered the hills of Jerusalem. The sight of it went to their hearts so sharply, that the chiefs and leaders at once offered sums of money for setting up the Temple anew. In gold and silver coins, they gave altogether something like £100,000 sterling, offering according to their ability."

"Coins, were they?"

"We have the first mention here in the Bible of coined money. The invention was started by the Greek cities of

Asia Minor and Europe ; Croesus had coined money ; and naturally, though only lately, it had been introduced into Persian currency."

"This is a step forward in civilization," said Liph. "So all the people went, I suppose, to their old homes ; as the 70th verse says ; but pray, how could it be 'all Israel' ? This little band of Jews was not 'all Israel.'"

"No, but they were what represented it. Take notice, in chapter ii. 2, eleven leaders are named, more correctly twelve, including Joshua ; and evidently these were intended to represent the twelve tribes, each under its several leadership. The twelfth name, omitted here, is given in another list ; and in chapter vi. 17, at the dedication of the new Temple, you see that twelve bullocks were offered for the twelve tribes. The little remnant returned was Israel now."

"And I suppose there were some of the other tribes mixed in among them."

"Doubtless, as there had been since the days of Jeroboam, who drove the faithful away from the northern kingdom into the southern. Well, children, to go on : the first thing, naturally, after looking at the empty Jerusalem hills, was to go each family where it belonged, and make a beginning towards setting up their old homes again. This would make them very busy for a while. But the country was more or less occupied by heathen settlers, and heathen neighbours were all around them in numbers and power ; and an anxious fear took possession of the hearts of the Jewish exiles. They were in the midst of danger. So it was to ask and secure the Lord's protection that they gathered together at Jerusalem to build the great altar and renew the sacrifices and daily service. You may see what the feeling was, for the people came together as one man to Jerusalem. This was 'when the seventh month *approached*,' iii. 1, not when it was 'come ;' that is, before the end of September. The priests, with Joshua at their head, and the nobles under Zerubbabel, built the altar ; not 'upon his bases,' for the

bases were not there, but 'on its place;' that means, its old place. The first of Tisri, the seventh month, they were able to begin the daily sacrifices in their order. Then came on the fifteenth of the month, and they kept the Feast of Tabernacles.

"What a time of sorrow and joy that must have been: All over and round the hill of Jerusalem, the fourteenth of Tisri, rose green booths or huts made of branches of trees. You know, at that time of the year the harvest and vintage are over, and the ground is pretty barren and bare; but the weather is delightful, as we found it lately. The people fetched branches of palm-trees and myrtles and pomegranates or tamarisks, and built booths. All over the ground, where your eye looks, there was a green camp; covering what had been dry and waste. These huts were made as comfortable as might be; carpets spread, hangings lining the walls, lamps suspended, every preparation made for a week's abode; and then, when evening came on and the lamps were lit, they could imagine the city there again; only they knew the city was not there; and the suppers taken that night under those leafy bowers, if they were glad with hope, must have been sometimes wetted with tears. The booths must have been all over there, children, where the city of the Moslems is now."

"What did they do next day?"

"That was a high day. The priests were astir by midnight, examining the sacrifices and offerings and making ready. By early morning light the people came out from their booths and assembled round the great altar. Every one held a citron in his left hand, and in his right hand a bunch of palm, oleander and myrtle branches tied together."

"What for?"

"This was the 'Feast of Ingathering.' The meaning looked first, no doubt, to the finished year and completed harvests; for all the fruits and the crops and the vintage were gathered and stored. Rejoicing over that, and in remembrance of the days of their wandering when they

made booths to live in and had 'no continuing city;' so the palm leaves reminded them of the desert, and the willow or oleander branches of the streams they had crossed in their wanderings; and the myrtle boughs of the valleys and hills of fruitfuller growth. But the whole, if it looked back to the wanderings in the desert, looked also forward; to the great festival which will be held 'when all the saints get home;' when the harvest of the earth shall be reaped, and Christ will have gathered the wheat into His barn; and the people of the Lord will 'remember all the way which the Lord their God led them,' and know that their wanderings are over; and Jerusalem shall be a 'quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.'"

"Did they know, those old Jews, that it meant all that?" I asked.

"Partly. I cannot tell how much. Let me go on. That morning, as I said, the people assembled, and the daily sacrifice was killed. Just as the pieces were ready to be laid on the altar, there were three blasts blown from the priests' silver trumpets; and then a priest was seen approaching through the crowd, with a golden vessel of water which he had just drawn from the spring of Siloam at the foot of the hill. He had gone with a glad procession and with music, and so timed his movements that about when the pieces of the sacrifice were ready he would be coming through the 'water-gate,' which got its name from that vase of water. That is, when the Temple courts were there; now there was no court and no gate, of course. As he came up he was met by the priest who bore the vase of wine of the drink-offering, one crying to the other and the people echoing after them—'With joy we draw water from the wells of salvation.' Then the wine and the water were poured out, the music burst forth in full band, and the Hallel was sung; that is, you know, Ps. cxiii.-cxviii. When they sang Ps. cxviii. 1, 'O give thanks unto the Lord,' and verse 25, 'Save now, O Jehovah,' and again at

the 29th verse, 'O give thanks unto the Lord'—all the assembled people shook their palm branches towards the altar."

"Those words about the 'wells of salvation' are in Isaiah," Priscilla remarked.

"Yes, and the Rabbis understood the ceremony to refer to the promised pouring out of the Holy Spirit. That is certain. So you see the whole festival looked forward to the time of finished salvation and accomplished life-work, and the utmost joy in God. Everything about the festival was in *sevens*, the sacred number which belongs to the kingdom of God. The feast was to continue seven days; it came at the height of the seventh month; the sacrifices were all of seven or of a number divisible by seven; seven goats for sin-offerings, seventy bullocks, fourteen rams, ninety-eight lambs. Every day after the offerings the priests went in procession round the altar, singing, 'O save now, Jehovah! O Jehovah, send now prosperity!'—and the seventh day they went round seven times."

"That is reminding of Jericho."

"But did Isaiah write those words because they were used in this feast? or did the people use them in the feast because Isaiah wrote them?"

"I do not know, Prissy. I cannot tell. I do not even *know* that they were so used at that Feast of Tabernacles of which we are talking. But it was the custom in the time of our Lord, and I think it likely the custom had been merely handed down. They drew the water and poured it out; *that* we know. Then followed the other offerings of the Festival for the day. Then they went to their booths, to cook and eat with all possible rejoicing the portions of the sacrifices which belonged to the offerer's feast of communion with God. The study of the law came next in order; next the evening sacrifice; after that the ceremony which they called 'the joy of the pouring out of the water.' When the Temple was rebuilt, in later times, the scene of this ceremony was the Court of the Women. Four great golden candelabra, each with four large golden lamps, were

fixed on high, and the lamps were well fed with oil; and the illumination, it is said, lit up all Jerusalem. The Levitical band of the choir, with countless instruments, stood on the steps leading up to the court of Israel and made magnificent music, singing psalms of praise; and the rejoicing of the multitude was beyond all other rejoicing."

"They must have had some notion of what it meant," said I. "But how would they do for their illumination that night, when there was no Temple?"

"I am sorry I cannot tell. But it would not fail; that night of all nights, when the returned remnant were renewing the celebration of those symbols of hope and glory which belonged to their nation; they could not miss the illumination, which foretold how the Messiah would be 'a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel.' This rejoicing, remember, was 'the joy of the pouring out of water;' and *that* meant, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and they understood it so."

"What did they carry citrons for, in their hands, in the morning?"

"Those symbolised the fruits of the good land; as the bunch of palm, myrtle, and oleander reminded the people of their desert wandering. Do you recollect, in the Revelation, the great multitude which no man could number, which John saw in vision, he saw them stand before the throne, '*with palms in their hands*'? But, however, at this particular feast there was one source of joy wanting, which had been wont to be there in former days; and they must have missed it sadly."

"What was that?"

"The peace of the atonement. The tenth day of Tisri was in the Jewish calendar the Great Day of atonement; when the high priest went into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sin-offering for all the people, and afterward the scapegoat was let go into the wilderness with all their sins on its head, to testify to the people how utterly through the blood of atonement God had put them away. The whole people breathed out a free breath, as it were,

when the work of that day was well over ; and immediately after followed the Feast of Tabernacles."

"Why couldn't they offer the sin-offering and send away the scapegoat into the wilderness, as usual?"

"No Temple, no Holy of Holies, no possibility of bringing the atoning blood into the presence of God."

"And they had had no Temple for so many years ! I don't wonder the good Jews were in a hurry to get back and build it up."

"So it was the next thing they took in hand. The daily service and the recurring festivals were observed regularly, though it seems to have been much from a motive of fear. Meanwhile, the leaders made agreement with Phœnician workmen and dealers to send down cedar trees from Mount Lebanon, pledging payment in corn and wine and oil, as Solomon had done. Like Solomon's timber, these trees were to be floated down in rafts along shore, to Joppa. The little bit of a reef-sheltered spot at that place was the best harbour they could command."

"Why, it is only a few yards square," said Liph.

"No more ; but the best they had."

"'According to the grant'—what was the grant?"

"You find it in chap. vi. 3. The decree of Cyrus provided for the expenses of the rebuilding, and fixed the size of the new Temple. Between Tisri and the second month of the next year, it seems that materials were brought together in sufficient quantity for making a beginning of the work ; and the Levites were appointed to the special supervision of it. Three classes or families of them are mentioned, the sons of Joshua, the sons of Kadmiel, and the sons of Henadad. Read now chap. iii. 10-13."

"I can understand that," I said when Dan had finished. "But how old must the men have been, who had seen the first Temple?"

"That Temple was destroyed B.C. 588, and the foundations of the new Temple were laid B.C. 535 or 534."

"Fifty-three or four years," said Dan. "Yes, men might have seen that Temple well enough and be now no more

than seventy years old, or less. I don't quite see why they should take on so."

"Think of the glory and happiness lost. Think of *how* it had been lost. Remember, the ark of the covenant was gone, with the tables of the law given to Moses. The fire that fell from heaven at the dedication of Solomon's Temple was extinguished for ever. The Shekinah was gone; probably they hoped it would come back; but for the present the desolation was utter, and the contrast very bitter between the 'noble and beautiful house' where their fathers had worshipped, and the burnt hill-top and the new foundations beginning to be laid by weak hands. If the young men shouted, it is no wonder the old men wept."

CHAPTER IX.

BUILDING.

THE next thing is, that the building of the Temple was stopped.

"Who are these 'adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,' iv. 1?"

"All their neighbours, pretty much, were their enemies; enemies from old time. These specially seem to have been their Samaritan neighbours. See 2 Kings xvii. 24-34. A mingled and mongrel race, from many lands, of many religions, here forced into one. There were two importations, one under Shalmaneser, or more properly, Sargon; the second much later, under Ezarhaddon."

"Did they worship the God of the Jews, as they said?"

"No. The Israelite priest, who was sent by the king of Assyria at their request to instruct them, was but one of the ministers of the golden calves; it was a very odious and mixed idolatry altogether."

"But what harm to let them help build?" asked Liph.
"They could build, I suppose, even if they were not right in their opinions."

"Ay, so men reason nowadays," said Uncle Sam.
"History repeats itself."

"Well, sir, why not?"

"The old reasons, Liph. On the part of outsiders, the Lord does not like service which is not obedient service; therefore He would not have liked that. On the part of His people, He has forbidden them to be 'unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' Zerubbabel and Joshua were right to say, 'Ye have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God.'"

Liph was understood to murmur something about its being not very "liberal."

"Then the people 'weakened their hands,'—how?"

"Annoyances and interferences and threats, I suppose; taking down the courage of the workers. Not content with that, they 'hired counsellors,' probably at the court of Persia, 'to frustrate their purpose;' ands ucceeded. Cyrus would know nothing about the matter; it was easy enough at such a court to hold back the supplies, and give a hint here and there to officers who could discourage the work by hindering workmen and stopping the transport of material or the payment of wages. The building was stopped. There was not energy enough, or will to the work, among the Jews to carry them through all obstacles. The building came to a standstill, and nothing more was done for fourteen or fifteen years; till Darius Hystaspes was king."

"Sir," said Liph, "the kings between Cyrus and Darius Hystaspes were Cambyases and Pseudo Smerdia."

"Yes. Well?"

"Neither of them was Ahasuerus or Artaxerxes."

"That is begging the question. Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes were names of honour. Smerdis was a usurper, who wished to establish the Magian religion in his empire, and so discouraged the purer Persian Zoroastrian faith. It was quite like him to interfere with the Jews; but it would have been very unlike a Persian king, who always shrank from reversing any decree of a former sovereign. The spirit of Ormuzd, their chief deity, was supposed to have spoken in them. Cambyases, accordingly, did nothing to trouble the doings at Jerusalem. And Darius, as soon as he knew of the decree of Cyrus, reaffirmed it."

"But these letters, or this letter, to Artaxerxes, speak of the *city* building; the Jews were not building the city."

"No, but it suited the purpose of the Jews' enemies to put the charge in that form."

"And who were Rehum and the rest?" said I.

"Rehum was a person high in office, civil governor perhaps; Shimahai, the secretary."

"Why was the letter written in Syrian?" Dan asked. "Was Syriac the language of the Samaritans?"

"No; they spoke a mixture, perhaps nearer Hebrew in part. Syriac was the official language of the court of Persia for countries west of the Euphrates.

"So the Temple building was stayed when it was but little more than begun. Five years of the reign of Cyrus, seven and a half of Cambyzes, seven months of Smerdis, and a year of Darius passed away; and there had been nothing but hindrances. Supplies stopped, materials detained, men intimidated; finally the order of the king prohibiting any going on. But another cause had been at work. The people themselves had not been heartily engaged. They had been looking after their own interests; they were building their own houses, using perhaps some of the very timber which had been brought from Lebanon for the Temple. Their brethren in Babylon were thriving and growing rich; and these were seeking to get good crops and make the land give forth its old fruitfulness. And yet nothing prospered. Dry winds blew, which brought no rain clouds; or warm west winds came which blasted and withered what was growing. Blight and insects and plagues of various kinds kept the colony from thriving; and it seemed as if nature and nature's God were against them."

"How happened that, Uncle Sam?"

"It did not *happen*, my dear. It came according to a most logical sequence of cause and effect."

"How, sir?" said Liph.

"According to those words of our Master—'Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.'"

"And they had not?"

"They had not."

"Uncle Sam, where does it tell?"

"I will show you. Let us go on to the second year of Darius. The services and ceremonial were regularly kept up, as they could without a Temple; and so it came to a *feast* of the new moon. And this was the way of it. The

evening before, the high priest and the council had met to declare the time officially ; watchers were set upon high points and watch-towers, to spy the first appearance of the new moon. As soon as they saw it, they hastened away to tell the high priest and the council. Then the high priest said solemnly, 'It is hallowed,' and the Sanhedrim answered, 'It is hallowed.' Then fires were kindled over the hills to telegraph the announcement everywhere. The Samaritans used later to annoy the Jews by kindling watchfires on a wrong evening, so bringing everything into disorder. The Jews were obliged then to despatch messengers, instead of lighting fires. Which manner was used now, we do not know. The next day, all the people gathered around the altar of sacrifice. The daily lamb was offered. After that, the offerings for the new moon ; the burnt offering of two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs, with the flour and the oil belonging thereto, with quarts of wine poured out as a drinkoffering ; and a sin offering of a goat. While the burnt offering was offered, the priests blew the trumpets, and the psalms of praise called the great Hallel were sung. To the thoughtful and devout among the crowd it must have been rather a sorrowful occasion, in the contrast with what had been in former days ; to the rest it was a formality, to which they attached more or less importance. Then, while the people were still altogether, rose up and stood forth an old man, one of the oldest there, and addressed them in what would be nowadays thought a very extraordinary speech."

"Who was that ?"

"The prophet Haggai."

"Where does it say he was old, sir ?"

"Nowhere, directly. But it is inferred, from the fact that he spoke of the first Temple, chap. ii. 3, as if he were one of those who had seen it ; and also from the fact that all his public ministry was contained within the space of four months. If he had seen the first Temple, he must indeed have been an old man ; for Solomon's Temple had been destroyed now some sixty-seven or eight years. And if he

were not an old man, it would seem strange that no word of his is reported later than some four months after this time. But now see his speech—

“‘This people say, The time is not come to build the house of the Lord.’ That shows their condition of mind. They were carelessly leaving the building undone, submitting to hindrances, when if they had a mind they could have overcome hindrances. And then the old prophet gave them his message, which he told them came from the Lord.—‘Is it time for you, *you*, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house waste? Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.’”

“What did he mean?”

“‘*See what you are doing and what it is leading to.*’ And then he went on to remind them that they were having ill success on every hand. Crops were poor; they got food to live upon, but not enough to enjoy; and what they earned over and above somehow had a marvellous facility of melting away and disappearing. They had had a constant succession of what we should call ‘bad times.’ So the messenger of the Lord bade them look at their ways.”

“What had their ‘ways’ to do with bad times?”

“Everything. So the Lord told them. Read what Haggai said. You looked for a large yield, and you got a poor one; and when you brought home what you had gained, something happened to it. ‘Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.’ And therefore the dews of heaven had been withheld, and the ground was barren and drought came, and every produce and fruit of the land failed and was stinted.”

“Because the Temple building was stopped?” cried Liph.

“And the people ‘ran every man to his own.’ They sought their own particular advantage, and did not care about the Lord’s house.”

“I wonder if it is so sometimes nowadays?” said I.

“There is no Temple to build nowadays,” said Liph.

"There is the Temple, of which that one was but the image and symbol. The Lord is building Him a Temple of living stones, and all the Lord's true servants are at work on the building. And it is a complaint of one of His true servants, made many hundred years later, that 'all men seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.' However, there was a spirit in those old Jews which felt and roused up to the appeal of Haggai. Zerubbabel the governor, and Joshua the high priest, and all the people with them, heard and obeyed and feared. Then Haggai gave them the encouraging promise, 'I am with you, saith the Lord.'

"That appeal was made the first of the month. The people made their preparations, and by the 24th were ready to begin the work again. Perhaps their hearts failed them a little; however, before another month was gone came the Feast of Tabernacles. The last day of that feast another message was delivered to the people by the hand of Haggai. Read it in the 2d chapter, the first nine verses."

"They did not think much of the new Temple," said I.

"Haggai calls it the *same*. 'This house,'" said Dan.

"The type was one, if the building were changed."

"Solomon's building was so splendid," I went on.

"Furthermore, it had much that to Zerubbabel's Temple was lacking. The ark, the Shekinah, the Urim and Thummim, the fire from heaven. But the Lord promises here that the latter glory of the house should be greater than the glory of gold, or even than the glory of the Light in the cloud which symbolized and signified the presence of God in the holy place. By and by should come into this Temple He who was the only glory of it; and not in the symbol of light or in the veil of a cloud, but in His own very person in the veil of His human form. 'And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.'"

"But, Uncle Sam, that was when Christ came. And the shaking of the heavens and the earth?"—

"The prophecy speaks in one breath of the first coming of Christ and of the culminating glory of His second com-

ing. So did Malachi's prophecy; and many another in the same way joins the nearer and the further in one view, as it were."

"That prophecy must have been a great help to the people," said I; "even if they could not quite understand it."

"So it was meant to be a great help. Their zeal needed encouragement. But their love needed purifying and increasing, too. In the very next month Zechariah began his preaching, and what he preached was repentance. See the first chapter of Zechariah, verses 1-6."

"Who was Zechariah?"

"A young man, just beginning his career as Haggai's was closing. He was of a priest's family, and exercised the priest's office in due time; he must have been a child when he was brought from Babylon; and he was called to serve the Lord as a prophet before he was old enough to officiate as a priest."

"He told the Jews to 'turn to the Lord,'" said Dan. "I thought they were turned."

"True, in a sort. But in a vast majority of the people the national feeling had grown dull with the seventy years of exile. Think what a mere handful came back. Think, that of twenty-four courses of priests, only four sent representatives. And we shall not wonder perhaps that the religious and political life of even the remnant that did return needed quickening."

"Uncle Sam, what became of all the rest of the exiles, Jews and Israelites?"

"In the course of years a good many came straggling back to their own land. Galilee, you know, was full in the time of Christ. The larger part became more or less mixed up with the Gentiles among whom they dwelt; intermarried with them, and adopted their faith and manners. A very large number, however, kept their identity and their separateness; mingling with the multitude of Jews whom Alexander's policy helped to scatter through the world, and then again with the remainder of their countrymen who

were driven out of Palestine by the Romans. These were, and are, the Jews of the Dispersion ; see John vii. 35 ; 1 Peter i. 1 ; James i. 1. To come back to Zerubbabel and his brethren. Three months, to a day, from the time that they had begun building again, Haggai brought another sharp reproof from the Lord to the people."

"But what for, now they were building ?

"You know they had set up the altar of sacrifice, and had been carefully observing all the forms that they could ; while still their first duty, the rebuilding of the Temple, had been neglected. Haggai reminded them that the altar and the sacrifice cannot hallow a disobedient people ; but on the other hand, their disobedience defiled and vitiated both sacrifice and altar. Then he bade them remember how, while they let the Temple lie waste, the Lord had smitten all their industries with disappointment and blight ; they had not put the two things together, but these were the facts ; and now from this time the Lord promised to bless them, now when they were neglecting perhaps their own interests to do His work. That is the rule, children. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.' Haggai's preaching closed with the promise to Zerubbabel, that the coming King and Deliverer should be of his line ; like the promise made before to Abraham and to David. 'I will take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, and will make thee as a signet.'"

"How is that ?"

"The royal signet bears the king's name, and carries the king's power, and is the instrument of conveying the king's pleasure. In Christ 'dwelleth all the fulness of the God-head bodily.' It is another figure to express the manifold riches and beauty of the Messiah. Now, children, turn to the 5th of Ezra, and read. You see, as soon as Zerubbabel and his fellows began to go on with their work, the Persian governor of Syria and Phœnicia was informed of it, and came to see what they were about."

"And the Jews answered by a question !"

"No ; it should not be read so. Verse 4 means, they

told the governor and his associates the names of the leaders in the work. 'Then told we them after this manner what were the names of the men that were building this building.' They told them because they had been asked. See verse 10. This time the Jews were earnest and spirited, and 'the eye of their God was upon the elders' for good, and they were not allowed to be hindered. Tatnai went home and wrote up to court for orders. Read the rest of the chapter."

"Then Darius had search made for the decree. It was not in Babylon. How did they know where to look for it?"

"Probably there was a record that the edicts of Cyrus were laid up at Ecbatana."

"Ecbatana?"

"The capital city of Media. It stood near where a modern town called Hamedan now stands, at the foot of a high mountain ridge which thrusts itself out from the Zagros range upon the plain, ten thousand feet high. There was a famous palace, built by Cyaxares or Darius, the last Median king. Its circuit was the greater part of a mile; it was splendid with courts and colonnades, pillars of cedar or cypress, and panelled ceilings; the woodwork overlaid with gold and silver, and the roof plated with silver tiles. There, in some treasury of archives and precious things, the roll containing Cyrus' decree was found. Read it. Ezra vi. 1-12."

"It was all to be done at the king's expense," said Dan. "That would be a good lift to them."

"Sacrifices and all," said Liph. "Isn't that strange, for a Persian king?"

"Remember the stories of Daniel, the visions and prophecies and signs, by which God had forced from the rulers of the world-power the acknowledgment of His greatness and supremacy. They even desired the favour of this God; and so, you see, prayers and sacrifices were ordered to be offered on their behalf."

"I wonder if the Jews did it?"

"Yes, on certain days, for a long time thereafter."

"So the house was finished in four years, without any more trouble."

"Without any more real hindrance. But the people had unfriends around them, and were servants under the king of Persia and his servants ; that was trouble, for a Jew ; and entailed trouble. However, the Temple was finished. It stood over there in its place complete, with a half built, half ruined city around it. Things were in a weary state yet. Walls broken down and in rubbish heaps ; the gates gone ; defences laid low ; there was a vast deal to do yet before Jerusalem could begin to thrive."

"They ought to have begun with putting up the walls," said Liph.

"So men reason," said Uncle Sam. "But it is forgetting that the Lord is the defence of His people. Short-sighted ! short-sighted ! Except He keep the city, the watchman is of no use, nor the walls either. The Temple was finished and dedicated. It was not splendid like the first Temple, and the dedicating sacrifices were a sad contrast to those of that other day, when the 'sheep and oxen could not be numbered for multitude.' Notice that twelve he-goats were offered, as 'a sin offering for all Israel ;' the people, however scattered, being regarded still as one whole, and the little remnant in Judea being the only official presentment of them. That was in the twelfth month, Adar ; and in the next month they kept the passover. Evidently with a true revival of religious feeling, and with great unanimity ; for many of their brethren who had been mixed up with the neighbouring heathen, 'separated themselves unto them.'"

"Separated from what ?" said Liph.

"From heathen connections, heathen wives, heathen ways, and all the defilement therewith involved."

"But who is the king of Assyria, in verse 22 ?"

"Darius, the king of Persia, who was king over Assyria too."

CHAPTER X.

THE SILVER KINGDOM.

WHENEVER I looked over now towards the city and the Mosque of Omar, I used to call up in my imagination the time when the new Temple stood in the midst of ruins and disorder, and the walls of the city were still partly standing, and partly in heaps. I said I wondered how the people could bear to leave it so.

"They were few in number," said Uncle Sam ; "they were weak financially ; and to put up the walls all round the city, was a great undertaking. Also with unfriends on every side of them, and bitter enemies in some quarters, they knew they might reckon upon trouble and hindrance as soon as the work should begin. So it is not wonderful that they remained quiet and tried to better their circumstances in more private ways, letting the walls wait. Moreover, they had now no leaders. Zerubbabel and Joshua were gone ; Haggai, and probably Zechariah too, were dead. Until Ezra came from Babylon there was no one to head them."

"And when did he come ?"

"Fifty-seven years after the dedication of the new Temple. In the meanwhile the whole Jewish people came very near being swept away from the earth. We must look at that story, for the danger was the means of their great advancement."

"That is the story of Esther," said Dan.

"That is the story of Esther."

"I never could see where that story came in," Dan went on. "It always seems to stand by itself."

"It comes in the reign of the next king of Persia, who followed Darius Hystaspes. Ahasuerus, his son, better known to you under the name of Xerxes."

"Xerxes ! I know him," said Dan.

"If you know him, you may recognise him again in the story. But Tiny does not know him so well."

"Darius Hystaspes was a man," said Dan.

"Darius Hystaspes was a great monarch ; the greatest of all the Persian kings under Cyrus."

"What did he do ?" I asked.

"He had some notion of government," said Dan. "And he put things in a little order. All his empire, Tiny, he divided into portions and put under governors whom he called satraps ; and the tribute which each satrapy should pay was fixed and settled. And in war, Uncle Sam, he was good in war too. Where rebellion rose he put it down with a pretty strong hand ; and he carried his operations into Macedonia and Thrace, and even crossed the Danube to fight the Scythians. But Xerxes was contemptible."

"Darius died ?"—

"Before Christ 486, sir."

"Very well. Then came this weak, cruel, luxurious, tyrannical prince, his son Ahasuerus, or Xerxes.

"Was that the Xerxes who fought against the Greeks ?" I asked.

"And built his famous bridge of boats between Asia and Europe," said Dan. "Yes, Tiny, that is the man."

"But it don't call him Xerxes here ?"

"Never mind ; we are sure it was he. Turn to the first chapter of the book of Esther," said my uncle. "'This Ahasuerus reigned from India even unto Ethiopia ;' over what must have been a population of a hundred millions. And his court was splendid, with the splendour of the Arabian Nights. The story takes us at once to a scene and occasion of fairy-like beauty and magnificence, in the king's palace at Shushan, or Susa."

"Now where was Susa, Uncle Sam ?"

"Go in imagination beyond the Tigris. Fancy a beautiful plain, rich with grain and fruits, graceful with palm-trees, and sweet with citron and lemon blossoms. In the distance, but not more than some twenty-five miles away, a high

mountain range borders the horizon, rising to an elevation of eight or ten thousand feet. Cooling breezes come from its snowy tops to refresh the lower country, which is warm but delicious. Now fancy two little bright rivers sweeping through this plain, and at one point coming so near each other that not more than two miles and a quarter of the plain lie between. Just here, between the two streams, the city of Susa was situated. One of them was the famous Choaspes, the water of which was so bright and delicate that the king of Persia would drink no other ; it was carried along with him even when he went on warlike expeditions."

"How womanish !" said Liph.

"Indeed," said Priscilla, "women are not such fools as that.

"Perhaps they were in those days," said Uncle Sam. "Luxury is catching. Well, children, here in this flowery, breezy, lovely plain, and in the palace which Darius the Mede began here, was the favourite winter abode of the Persian kings. The palace of Darius was again like the Arabian Nights for beauty. It was lifted up on a lofty platform of stone and brick, which gave it a glorious look-out over the surrounding country. The mound of its ruins is more than a hundred feet high yet ; a hundred feet above the river."

"I should think people would dig into it," said Liph.

"People have dug into it."

"Did they find anything, sir ?"

"Enough to show to a certainty the plan and character of the edifice, when compared with ruins remaining in a more perfect state at Persepolis. The bases of pillars are found at certain regular intervals and in a certain peculiar arrangement."

"And what was it all like, Uncle Sam ?"

"We can give a pretty good guess, so much has been discovered. The whole, as I told you, was elevated on a great platform built up from the plain. In the centre of this platform it seems there was a very noble and beautiful

Great Hall of pillars. The platform was of enormous extent, you must understand ; and some of the staircases of access were among the most magnificent things of their kind. The Great Hall consisted of a central square of columns, thirty-six of them, six rows of six, measuring twenty-seven feet three inches from centre to centre. These columns were of exceedingly rich workmanship, carved and fluted, with capitals composed of two half bulls, upon which once rested the beams which connected the pillars above. Then, with an interval space of sixty-four feet to the east, a double row of twelve more columns stood flanking these, in two rows of six ; twelve more in similar position towards the north, and the like towards the west. Around this court you may imagine the beauties of a Persian garden, rich with roses and orange flowers and citron blossoms. Now to fill out the picture, fancy a pavement of coloured marbles, red and blue and white and black under and among all these pillars. Fancy hangings of blue and white, the Persian royal colours, shading off the sun, at the sides or overhead as might be desirable ; drawn up or let down, to exclude the dazzle of the sun's rays, or to let in the breezes coming over the flowery plains and allow the view to go unhindered to the snowy mountain tops and the glittering waters of the river. You can fancy the couches of gold and silver set by the side of the tables ; the gay draperies ; the golden vessels furnished for the guests to drink out of ; goblets and cups and bowls, all different from one another, so as to bring the utmost luxury of refinement into the pleasure of the entertainment."

"Uncle Sam, that sounds fascinating," said Priscilla.

"It is fascinating, my dear."

"But, what I was thinking," said Dan. "Does the world-power have all the prettiness and the pleasantness of things ? I mean, does all this you have been speaking of belong to the world-power ? I do not express myself well."

"I know what you mean," said Uncle Sam.

"I was thinking about the same thing," said L.

"You like the Arabian Nights sort of life, hey, Tiny!"

"I don't know," I answered. "I like all the pretty things. Uncle Sam, I do like them. *Do* they belong to the world-power?"

"The Lord Himself likes beautiful things, else He would not have made them, and made us so that we must like them. There is no harm in beauty, but good; and God has made the world so that it is full of things to be enjoyed. But now another question comes in. Can any one follow the Lord Jesus and do His work faithfully, and at the same time be seeking his own ease?"

We were all silent, until at last Dan answered, "He cannot."

"Then you see, Tiny."

"And these beautiful things *do* belong to the world-power!"

"Everything belongs to the world-power, that is not the Lord's," said my uncle. "So there comes in the rule by which we can judge. Whatever you do, 'do it in the name of the Lord Jesus'; what you cannot do for Him, or as His servant, leave alone."

"That could not have been a very 'refined' entertainment," said Liph, going back to my uncle's former words, "for it seems that the principal thing was to get drunk."

"Quite true. Rawlinson says that drunkenness had come to be a sort of institution. Once a year, at a certain feast, the king was bound to be drunk; and it seems he was drunk upon this occasion, since he called for the queen to show herself to the revellers."

"Then women did not show themselves generally?" said Priscilla.

"No. Not women of rank. Married women might not see even their own fathers and brothers. And Queen Vashti consulted her dignity in her refusal. The assembly of guests, after seven days' drinking, were in no condition to receive properly such an honour."

"Was this one of those feasts you spoke of, when the king was obliged to drink too much?"

"No, this was a different occasion. It was in the third year of Xerxes' reign, you observe. He had subdued Egypt and now gathered the chief men of the empire, great officers and princes, to consult with them and concert measures for his famous expedition against Greece."

"*That* was what they were gathered for!" said Jiph. "It says here, verse 4, that he showed them his riches and magnificence."

"Say, rather, the riches and resources of his kingdom, which would avail for the proposed expedition. For half a year they remained in council; no doubt Persian politics moved slowly; and at the end of the one hundred and eighty days the king made a grand feast to all his guests in Susa. Now you know something of the Persian palaces; don't you want to know what the Persian court was like?"

"We all want to know it, sir," said I.

"Dan and Jiph do know a little about it already. It was almost heavy with splendour, and yet too elegant to be called that. To begin with the king's appearance. He wore a long, loose robe of purple silk; all purple, unless where the silk was enriched with gold. It had wide, hanging sleeves, and was a very graceful and very dignified attire. He had a broad girdle round his waist. Under the purple robe he wore a tunic of purple and white, or blue and white, striped; and crimson trousers. His shoes were yellow, or saffron coloured, with long-pointed toes. All this costume, so far, was very like what his nobles wore; and it was very necessary that something about him should mark him out unmistakeably as the king, or else the demands of etiquette would have been continually infringed, and nobody's life would have been safe. So the king wore a peculiar high cap, enlarged somewhat towards the top, and with a band or fillet of blue round it spotted with white. Everybody else wore either low caps or no caps at all, only a fillet round the hair; so the king would be known as far as he could be seen. Besides all this, the king wore ear-rings of gold, a gold chain, gold bracelets on his arms, his girdle was golden, and the sheath of the short

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sword he carried was formed of a single precious stone ; agate, jasper, or lapis lazuli. The sceptre was one more thing which always went with him. It was a long golden rod with a ball at one end ; the other end tapering off like a cane. The king held it in his hand, grasping it near the heavy end and resting the pointed end on the ground ; whether he walked or sat he held it in this fashion.

"Then his throne is described as being also sometimes of pure gold. It was like a high-backed chair, provided with a footstool ; it was ornamented and cushioned and fringed. It stood upon lions' feet, and the footstool was furnished with bulls' feet. Now, can you imagine him ?"

"With his fan-bearer, Uncle Sam," said Dan.

"Fan-bearer or fly-flapper, and his parasol-bearer. These two attendants immediately about him ; but the ranks of court servants were innumerable ; from the great officers of the household and the stables, two of whom were called respectively, the 'eyes' and 'ears' of the king, to the crowd of secretaries, messengers, ushers, tasters, cup-bearers, chamberlains, and musicians ; besides all the guards and lower servants. Fifteen thousand people ate the king's food within his palace bounds every day."

"That is magnificence," said Liph.

"A thousand animals were killed for each meal, it is said, without speaking of birds and poultry. But the king dined alone, or sometimes admitted the queen to his table, with one or two of his children ; and sometimes commanded a few privileged guests. Even then the king dined alone lying on his golden-footed couch and drinking the wine of Helbon ; while his guests sat on the floor and contented themselves with something less exquisite."

"What was the wine of Helbon ?" Dan asked.

"A particularly delicious growth, no doubt. The wine of Helbon was carried to the markets of Tyre, where everything finest in the world was sold. A few miles from Damascus, high up on the range of Anti-Lebanon, there is still a place of the name, where are grown the finest grapes of all the region."

"I suppose if the king lived so, the nobles and the rich Persians used a good deal of luxury."

"A great deal. Originally that had not been their habit ; Persian manners had been simple and sensible ; but now all sorts of indulgence were common. Still, however, they paid a great deal of attention to the matter of educating their children ; and the Persians were the foremost people of Asia in their time."

"If the king had 'eyes' and 'ears' not in his own head, that means, I suppose, that he was pretty inaccessible ?"

"According to a severe system of etiquette. No one might have speech of the king, except he were presented and announced by one of the king's 'ushers ;' the only instances to the contrary being the heads of seven privileged noble families. At entering the presence every one was obliged to prostrate himself ; and as long as he remained in the presence he must keep his hands concealed under the wide, flowing sleeves of his robe. As he crossed the courts of the palace, he must take care not to set his foot on the carpet laid down there for the king's use. To enter the king's presence uncalled, was to forfeit one's life ; unless the monarch held out his golden sceptre towards the offender. And in general, a courtier's head stood uncertainly upon his shoulders. The least carelessness or neglect in office, even offences which were no offence, might take it off at any time. It depended on nothing more stable than the whim of the king. *That* might have been borne ; but in such cases life was often taken in the cruellest imaginable way, and when no crime was concerned. As I said, it might be for a mere whim of the king himself, or of the king's wife or favourite. It is told that when Xerxes was on his way to Greece, a certain Lydian, named Pythius, entertained him and gave a very great contribution towards the expenses of the war, besides furnishing five sons to the army. Thinking himself, perhaps, thereupon privileged to make a request of the king, Pythius begged that the eldest of his sons might be allowed to stay at home, for a stay and comfort to his old father. Nothing very

heinous in such a request ; however, Xerxes was so enraged that he commanded that eldest son to be killed and cut in two ; and then made his army defile between the two halves of the carcass. And now you are ready to understand the story of Esther."

"That sounds just like him," said Priscilla.

"The story begins precisely when Xerxes was laying his plans for that expedition against Greece?" said Liph.

"And had summoned the princes and great officers to take counsel."

"Of course he made them a feast. But how 'in the court of the garden' of the palace? What sort of place was that? Do you know, Uncle Sam?"

"It might well be that Great Hall of pillars of which I told you. Imagine that in the midst of the garden delights, with trees and shrubs and flowers all around. The blue and white hangings would screen the sun off wherever it was desirable, and be lifted in other parts to give the air and the view. Nothing can fit the description better."

"Then this was not the palace?"

"It certainly seems not. The pillars were over sixty feet in height, and there is no sign of any wall of enclosure."

"Then you did not tell us about the palace itself, Uncle Sam."

"Well, I did not. Imagine a square hall of columns, of less height and moderate size, surrounded by smaller chambers on two sides and fronted by a portico. Then, as this plan is of such moderate extent, you must imagine several of such buildings on the enormous platform ; houses of the women, houses of audience, etc. Then, finally, as a means of access to the lofty platform, you may imagine if you can the grand flights of stairs, leading up from the plain level, more noble and more elegant than anything else of the kind anywhere else in the world. One of those at Persepolis is over two hundred feet in length, and ten horsemen could go up or down over it abreast."

"Horsemen go up stairs!" cried Priscilla.

"Easily. The stairs are not four inches high, and they are sixteen feet wide."

"I say again, that is magnificence!" said Liph.

"There were a number of such staircases, not alike, in different parts of the platform; sometimes plain, sometimes highly ornamented with sculpture."

"And up those staircases, or such a one, Esther went, when she was going to be queen," said I.

"There is no doubt but she did," said Uncle Sam, laughing; "and indeed it was a significant thing for any one to go up those staircases."

"I have got it all in my head now," said Liph. "I understand. I am ready to go on with the story."

"We had got to Vashti's refusal," said I, "and the king's anger. You can fancy how angry that Xerxes would be."

"He must have been drunk as well," said Dan, "since he wanted help to know how to show his anger. Who are the 'men that knew the times'?"

"Those are the wise men, the magi, the soothsayers; they were supposed to read the heavenly bodies, and calculate 'times' of good fortune, and give occult advice generally. Without them the king did nothing of importance. And with them, on this occasion at least, were joined the seven princes highest in the realm, who were allowed at any time access to the king's presence, and advised him in great affairs. Seven was a noted number in the Persian state, taken perhaps from superstitious ideas about the seven planets; it occurs very often."

"They must have been very much afraid of their wives in Persia!" said Dan.

"The last clause of verse 22 means, that every man in his own family should speak his own language; and of course his foreign wives and slaves must conform themselves to it. That would show his headship. But now these gentlemen who had given the king counsel had therewith brought themselves into danger; for if he relented towards Vashti, which he might, their heads would not be worth much. So knowing this, they proposed a plan which might amuse the

king till he forgot her. All the beauties of the realm were to be sought for and brought together, that from them a new queen might be chosen."

"Must they come against their wills?" said I.

"If their wills were against it. Nobody had a right to his will in Persia, except the king. So the Jewess Esther came with the rest. She had been brought up by her cousin Mordecai, a Benjamite and a son of Kish; probably the Kish who was father of Saul; and we are not to suppose that he himself had been carried away from Jerusalem, one hundred and thirteen years before this time, but only that he was out of one of the families of the captivity. Esther was taken into the palace to go through the year of purification and preparation; and in hope and fear Mordecai walked every day in front of the court where she lived, to receive news of her. In any case she was lost to him; but for himself and his people it might be a great thing if she became queen."

"He had to wait a good while," said Liph. "Vashti was deposed in the third year of Xerxes; and Esther was not made queen before the seventh. Four years?"

"In which the king made his famous attack on Greece."

"Ah!" said Dan. "Then he had quite enough to do with his time."

"I don't know about Xerxes' attack on Greece," said I.

"Then you ought," Liph went on. "He collected an army of two and a half million people; thought he would swallow up little Greece, I suppose. They rendezvoused in Cappadocia. Every satrap led his contingent"—

"What is a contingent?"

"The troops," said Dan; "the part of the army his government was required to furnish; but they all had to serve under Persian officers. The soldiers were from fifty-six nations. So you see what Daniel's 'bear,' in his vision, was like. The Persian empire."

"No, I don't," said I. "How was it like a bear?"

"Heavy, savage, unwieldy," said my uncle. "'Devouring much flesh.' The empire was too large not to be unwieldy,

unless there had been a fine organising power at the head of it. Take the description of the army as Xerxes reviewed it on the plain of Doriscus."

"Where is the plain of Doriscus?"

"On the coast of Thrace."

"And what about that review of the army, Uncle Sam?"

"Its materials were so heterogeneous and the mass of them so enormous. Each nationality was drawn up in a separate body. There were Persians and Medes in tunics of mail, armed with bows and arrows, short spears and daggers. There were Cissians, dressed like them, only with no caps on their heads. Next, Assyrians and Babylonians, more heavily equipped, with brass helmets, shields, lances, and clubs. Scythians were there, wearing high-pointed caps, armed with bow and battle-axe. Then in contrast, Indian troops clad in cotton dresses; bows and arrows were their arms too. Caspians in cloaks of skin, with bow and scimitar. Arabs in their long mantles. Ethiopians in leopard and lion skins, with long bows, and short arrows tipped with stone, spears and clubs. Libyans in leather garments and carrying javelins. Thracians in many-coloured cloaks and with fox skins drawn over their heads; javelins and dirks. Lydians in Grecian equipment. Armenians and men of other parts of Asia Minor with helmets of plaited leather, buskins, shields and spears. Moschians and Colchians with wooden helmets, shields and spears. Sagartians on horseback, with lassoes for weapons. Libyans in chariots. Arabs on camels. Persian, Median, and Cissian horse; not to speak of the Egyptian, Phœnician, Cyprian, Cilician, Ionian and other ships, of which there was a great fleet. But you must read about the expedition for yourself, Tiny."

"Didn't he succeed? Xerxes, I mean."

"He failed, and Persia lost her European possessions. But we must notice one or two characteristic traits which illustrate the story of the book of Esther. Xerxes resolved to take his army into Europe by a bridge, Tiny, instead of trusting to the uncertainties of navigation in a multitude of tiny ships. He built a very superb bridge over the

Hellespont; such as the Persians were accustomed to make for the crossing of rivers at home. Boats were anchored, stem and stern, in successive rows, reaching from one shore to the other; secured by strong cables, upon which a platform of boards was laid. This famous bridge was laid double, and earth and brushwood was laid over the planking, with guards at the sides; *and* over it [the whole immense army was marched in seven days. The work was really so noble a one, and the impression made by it so imposing, that a Greek of the Hellespont who saw the crossing of the army is said to have given Xerxes the title of 'Zeus.' But this success was not attained without some reverse; the sea broke down the works once, and the king ordered the overseers of the work to be put to death, and that the Hellespont should be beaten with three hundred lashes and rebuked."

"And he put to death the son of Pythius," said Liph.

"That is just like the Ahasuerus of Esther," said Dan.

"And he did not succeed?" said L. "I am glad he did not."

"His discomfiture was utter. And it was after this failure in Greece that Xerxes came back to Susa and tried to make pleasure fill the place of glory. Then he published his offer of a reward to anybody who would invent some new gratification; and then he married Esther."

"I am sorry for Esther," said L.

"Mordecai sat in the king's gate—that sounds doubtful."

'He was not a beggar; he was one of the officers of the court. The 'king's gate' is supposed to have been a building a little apart from the palace, in the court; a beautiful hall, in which the king's officers waited, or attended to business. Mordecai was one of them. And it became known to Mordecai that there was a conspiracy on foot against the life of the king; he sent word of it to Esther, and she told the king. The two conspirators were impaled; a common Persian punishment."

"'Hanged on a tree'?"

"*In that fashion.* A pointed stake was run into the

breast, and planted in the ground. The victim was left hanging upon it."

"And nobody thought to thank Mordecai."

"My dear, it was written long ago, 'Put not your trust in princes.'"

"But, Uncle Sam, there are a number of things in this next chapter that puzzle me. Why should Mordecai make such an ado about bowing to Haman? The Jews used to do the same thing. Ahimaaz fell down before David, and so did Bathsheba."

"That was before the king. The Persian prostrated himself before the incarnation of Ormuzd, which he believed his king to be. So Pharaoh in Egypt was reckoned with the gods. Xerxes stretched a point and commanded that the same honour should be paid to Haman, as his representative."

"But Mordecai might have bowed to the *man*, without believing him an incarnation."

"That would have been understood as a consent to the faith of the people and to the religious worship involved."

"Nobody would have known any better."

"And so Mordecai would have denied his God."

"Not really, Uncle Sam."

"Before all the world. And you know, the Lord said, whosoever denies Him 'before men,' him will He also deny before the angels of heaven."

Liph was silent.

"Moredcai was not made of that stuff. At all risks, and he must have known that they were tremendous, he would not prostrate himself; and to his fellow-servants who made representations to him, he explained that he was a Jew; his religion forbade it. Then some of them, envious or spiteful, called Haman's attention to the slight put upon him. So the haughty noble resolved on the destruction of the whole people of the Jews. There was no difficulty about the scheme, with such a prince as Xerxes; the only question was the superstitious one, of a lucky day for the work; so the lot was cast, and fell, as God would have it, upon the

very last month of the year ; giving space for all that was to be done. Which Haman knew nothing of."

"Who cast the lot?"

"Some magician of course."

"How did they do it?"

"That nobody now knows."

"Haman went very cunningly to work," said Dan.

"Representing the Jews as an independent, unmanageable people, likely to be seditious and refractory. And then offering a huge bribe to the king's finances. According to the estimate of the Mosaic shekel, near four million sterling ; that is, three million and three quarters. But the king waived the bribe, put his signet ring into Haman's hand, and with it full power to do what he liked. Sealed with the king's signet the writing would be irreversible, even by the king himself."

"The lucky day chosen was the thirteenth of the twelfth month."

"And so, on the thirteenth of the first month the secretaries were set to work to prepare the writings. These were sent to every satrap, and governor, and to the native ruling princes as well ; written in the official language for the former, and in the several native tongues for the latter ; that there might be no mistake or neglect, and that the work might be surely accomplished."

"Who was to take the spoil?"

"Haman a part, no doubt, since the king had given it to him. The rest made over to the local governors or agents would be a sufficient incentive to carrying out the king's decree."

"Then the posts went forth and carried the writings."

"What were the posts?" I asked.

"They were the representatives of the Persian postal system ; and it was not a bad system, for a nation of their degree of cultivation. Messengers were sent on relays of swift horses, which sped with the king's letters to all parts of his dominions. They carried no mails for the *common* people ; but the king's work they did punctually

and with great despatch. The roads established for them were excellent, and good khans were set up along the way from station to station ; so that all the travelling world reaped an essential benefit. The posts went out, with a special charge to hasten in bearing this decree of extermination to those who were to execute it ; and the king and Haman sat down to drink ; but no wonder that the city Shushan was thrown into uneasiness at the news."

"How long would it take for the posts to get to the furthest-off provinces?"

"Perhaps three weeks."

"Then there would be ten months and more before anything could be done. Why did Haman make such haste?"

"The Jews would have time to flee and get away," said Priscilla.

"Where should they flee to? Certainly a few rich families might quit Asia and go over to Europe ; but in all Asia they were under the power of Ahasuerus. I suppose Haman's rage would not wait, and fed already on the distress and dismay the letters would call forth wherever any of Mordecai's countrymen were found. The decree could not be reversed ; it was safe ; and I suppose Haman wanted the enjoyment of it to begin at once. But God had caused the lot to fall on so distant a month that his revenge only overreached itself. If he could have waited, nothing could have saved the Jews."

CHAPTER XI.

EZRA'S COMMISSION.

It rained hard the next day. Prissy and I were prisoners in our tent. But we liked it. The weather was not very cold, and the patter of the raindrops sounded with a pleasant, gentle monotony, and the air was good. We read and wrote, and studied the Book of Esther, all day. Uncle Sam and the boys went out and into the city. Then at evening we dined under canvas again, yet with the tent door open towards Jerusalem; and then our table was removed bodily. In a few minutes we were in order and ready with our books.

The fourth chapter of Esther was read.

"Haman must have been happy, those days," said Dan, "for the Jews everywhere were miserable enough. If I had been Mordecai, I would not have given him the satisfaction of seeing it."

"Mordecai wanted somebody else to see it. He might well guess the truth, that no one would tell Esther what was indeed not supposed to concern her. He could not see her himself. He took care to show his parade of mourning where it would strike the eye of some of her attendants."

"How could he put on ashes, Uncle Sam?"

"Cover his head with them. Nothing could be in stronger contrast with the dainty care of the head and beard usual in festive times. A coarse black garment of rough goat's-hair; sacking, in fact; and ashes on the head; that was significant of a very distressed mental condition."

"Esther would understand that. But what did she mean by sending other clothes out to him?"

"It is thought, she meant that he should come into the palace, which no one might do in mourning ; but it does not appear that in any case he could have speech of the queen personally. However, Mordecai resisted the invitation ; and I think, if it had been an invitation to see her, he would have accepted it. Esther was in great perturbation, and sent another messenger to get such information as he could in the street. But the matter was public enough. Mordecai sent her a copy of the decree, and also told her of the sum Haman had promised to pay, to buy the life of the Jewish nation therewith ; and then added his charge, that she should do for them what only she could."

"I do not see what was her difficulty," said Liph. "People might not go into the presence of the king without being announced ; but they might be announced."

"They might ; but not, it appears, if the king was 'in the inner court.' When he withdrew himself into certain more retired apartments of the palace, it seems it was understood to mean that he would not be disturbed ; and thither at this time the king had betaken himself. Probably giving himself up to low pleasures and refusing to hear of business ; a mood of mind which Haman might very well foster, seeing that it suited his interests well. Besides, if Esther had had herself announced, she might have been obliged immediately to make known her business ; and it was a very hopeless business, children. Mercy or justice were not things known to Ahasuerus ; and if they had been, a Persian king had no power to set aside his own decree, once made and signed. So do not blame Esther."

"But what did Mordecai's answer mean ?"

"That she might as well venture, for her own life was at stake. That perhaps she held her present position, as given from God, on purpose that she might use it now in furtherance of His plans. For you see, Mordecai believed in the Lord's promises to His people. See verse 14. Then Esther called for a great union prayer-meeting."

"She don't say anything about prayer, sir."

"She means it, my boy. Fasting, even among the neathen, was understood to be an accompaniment of prayer ; and it was the only form of common worship which was used by the Jews living in Gentile lands."

"But three days without food or drink !"—

"That is, till the third day. Pretty severe, even so ; but the third day, you see, Esther went in to speak to the king. I do not wonder he stretched out his golden sceptre to her. She must have been wonderfully lovely that day. I can easily fancy that a strange spiritual beauty and a peculiar unearthly dignity were in her face and bearing ; something that lifted her up out of the sphere of the sensual Ahasuerus, and made her seem like a celestial, superior creature. For she *was* lifted up above the level of ordinary life ; she was daring, to the point of taking her life in her hand ; and she was trusting, with that trust in God which always ennoble those who feel it. She was so lovely, and pure, and fair, and humble, and lofty at once, as she stood there, that the king offered her half of his kingdom if she wanted it."

"Then why did she not make her petition ?"

"Perhaps she desired to get a little firmer hold of the king's heart. Perhaps she shrank from the final trial which must win all or lose all. Perhaps she wanted a more private place and occasion. I guess she was wise."

"I suppose that was a wonderful banquet," said Dan.

"You may be sure of that. You may be sure that the queen prepared everything with wonderful art to surprise and please the senses that were tired with pleasure ; and that the second banquet was still an advance upon the first."

"I think, do you know, she was a little bit of a coward," said Prissy.

"I think, do you know, she might very well be that," said Uncle Sam, "when she had such a wild beast to manage as Ahasuerus. However, between the first and the second banquet Haman got his first check. That evening he had a stake, or a tree rather, of enormous height, set up, with



ESTHER AND AHASUERUS.

the intention that Mordecai should be impaled on it before another setting sun. And that night,—how wonderful the ways of Providence are !—the king could not sleep.”

“And so Mordecai was saved.”

“What time was it when Haman came to court to speak about Mordecai?”

“Early morning. As early as it would do to be there. For the banquets of wine were held early in the day; and Haman had time to make a progress through all the city leading Mordecai's horse, before he had to go to the queen again. Mordecai wore a robe the king had worn, rode a horse the king had mounted; adorned and crowned according to the fashion of the king's horses.”

“I thought Mordecai wore the crown.”

“That was a mistake; the horse was crowned.”

“Why did Haman's wife take such a gloomy view of the situation?”

“If you recollect a number of things which had happened since the Captivity, and become widely known, you will understand that a feeling might well have grown up among the Gentile nations, which gave them a certain awe of the Jews. There could be no doubt but they were a specially favoured and protected nation, and their God was able to protect them. It might be something more than superstition, which took this discomfiture of Haman before Mordecai as an omen. So Haman went to the banquet the second day with what spirit he could.”

“And I suppose that banquet was everything a banquet could be.”

“And the king, flattered and pleased and charmed, again asked to know what Esther's petition was. The day before, she had begun to speak and hesitated. ‘If it please the king’—then she stopped, and begged only for the further favour of his company the next day. But now no more delay was possible. The truth must come out. The risk must be run. And you may suppose that Esther did not let her petition lack persuasion. You can fancy the beautiful woman falling down at the king's feet, and entreating

him with all the power of looks and gestures and tears, as well as words. And the king was greatly wrought upon."

"I do not know what she meant by the last part of verse 4, though."

"Perhaps we must render it somewhat differently, thus 'If we had been sold for slaves, I would have been silent; for the enemy is not worth troubling the king about.'"

"So Haman was hanged on his own tree."

"Impaled. And his confiscated house and property were made over to the queen. Mordecai received the king's seal, which made him prime minister or grand vizier, and also the confiscated wealth. But the end was not attained yet; for the edict still stood, empowering all people to slay and destroy the Jews, come the twelfth month and the thirteenth day of the month. Neither could this edict be set aside by any human power. So Esther might well fall before the king and beseech him with tears to undo the mischief his decree had prepared. The king would grant her anything, but he could not do this. So the new letters were written. Read the 8th chapter."

"Was that the king's robe, in which Mordecai appeared?"

"Blue and white were the royal colours; but no, this was his state dress as first minister; the contrast to his sackcloth and ashes. So read the rest of it, children."

"Don't you think Esther was rather bloodthirsty?" asked Liph when this had been done.

"Not if you take her words accurately. She requested only that the Jews might do on the 14th Adar 'according to the decree' for the 13th; that is, might defend themselves against assault. She might have reason to know that the attack in the city would be renewed. And the exposing the bodies of Haman's ten sons would be simply another measure of prudence, deterring all enemies from further meddling with the Jews."

"So that is the origin of the feast of Purim."

"*Pur* meaning 'lot.' The Jews keep the feast to this day. It is a great time for sending presents to one another. So here again, children, God turned evil into good for His

people. Mordecai was in place and power where he could greatly help and favour them; Jews were in honour from India to Ethiopia; and many heathen became convinced that truth was on their side, or at least safety, and joined them. Of course the Jews in Palestine shared in the general advantages of the race at this time; but we have no more details about them until the seventh year of the reign of Xerxes' successor, Artaxerxes Longimanus. Now we go back to Ezra, seventh chapter.

"Ezra is called the son of Seraiah. Seraiah was the high priest whom Nebuchadnezzar killed at Riblah, and that was one hundred and thirty years back. Ezra could have been only his great-grandson, or still further removed. For Joshua, the high priest who returned with Zerubbabel, was himself Seraiah's grandson. But now see *what* this man Ezra was, children; his character is a fair one. First, he was a scribe. That meant originally the same as a secretary; but it had come already to bear the sense of a student of the law; one learned in Scripture. And in verse 10, we find that he had given his whole heart to this one thing; to study the law of God and to teach it to his brethren. It follows easily and naturally that 'the king granted him all his request according to the hand of the Lord his God upon him.'"

"Why, sir?"

"Study the first psalm. Meanwhile we must look at Ezra's commission. It was, first, 'to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law.' That is, he was to arrange affairs in Judæa, both civil and religious affairs, as the law of God said they should be. Second, He was to carry up gifts from the king and his ministers, and the people; 'all that he could find in Babylon,' or that he could collect from the Babylonians, with the free-will offering of the Jews who remained in the country. Third, With this money he was to purchase animals for sacrifice, with corn and wine and oil; and apply the surplus, if he had any, as seemed to him best. The gold and silver vessels presented, he was to deliver in the Temple. Then fourth, as

there might be other expenses needed, for which these gifts would not be sufficient, Ezra was furnished with an order upon the king's treasurers beyond the Euphrates, for anything not exceeding a certain limit."

"How much did it amount to?"

"The money, a hundred talents, would be over £34,000, a *cor* of wheat was the same as a homer, eight bushels and a trifle more; the *bath* was seven gallons and a half. You see, the king had a profound impression of the power of the God of the Jews, and desired His favour and the prayers of His ministers in His Temple. So follows, fifthly, the order to exempt from all taxes and tribute the priests and Levites and all servants of the Temple. And lastly and sixthly, Ezra was to appoint judges in the land, of the people of the land; Israelites, who knew the law of God. This was exceedingly important. The Jews' laws were so peculiar and apart from those of other nations, that without judges of their own it was impossible but that things should be all out of order in the country. This is the commandment to 'restore' Jerusalem, according to Dan. ix. 25; from which to the date of the baptism and anointing of Christ the term is just sixty-nine weeks, or four hundred and eighty-three years. The decree of Cyrus concerned the rebuilding of the Temple and the return of the people; Darius' decree was simply confirmatory of that; this is the first mention of the restoration of the Jewish polity; reorganising of the state. Things evidently up to this time were in great disorder."

"Ezra must have had good courage, Uncle Sam, when you come to think of it."

"He had 'the good hand of his God upon him;' which is better."

"How many people went back with Ezra?"

"Sixteen hundred and eighty-three men; with their families, making between eight and nine thousand."

"But that is very few!" said Dan.

"Ay," said my uncle. "The greater part liked ease in Babylon better than hardship in Judea. It is not different,

Dan, nowadays. 'All seek their own,' said Paul eighteen hundred years ago, 'not the things which are Jesus Christ's.' And in that little company at first gathered to go, though there were a few priests there was not a Levite. Most of those who went had connections already in Judæa, whose fathers went up with Zerubbabel; indeed there is only one family which forms an exception."

"Where was their meeting-place? this 'river that runneth to Ahava'?"

"It is not known now. It might be one of the great canal branches in the neighbourhood of Babylon. They 'began to go up from Babylon' the first day of the first month, *i.e.*, Nisan; in spring, when travelling in Mesopotamia is delightful. For three days, see chapter viii. 15, the company was assembling, and the travellers abode in tents by the river; making last arrangements, sending back for forgotten things; for so is the manner of beginning a journey in the East. One night will do usually, but this journey was for long and for ever. While they waited there, and Ezra reviewed his company, he found that there was not a Levite among them. Upon this he immediately sent messengers to a place not far off but now unknown, with representations to Iddo, a chief man among the Levites and priests in that region. And the messengers succeeded in their errand. Forty Levites joined the company, with two hundred and twenty lower servants of the Temple. Then they were all ready, with the exception of a convoy."

"I should think eight thousand people would not need one," Priscilla said.

"On the contrary. Remember, they carried all their goods along; they had a large collection in money for the use of the Temple, and a number of very precious gold and silver vessels besides. There was rich booty to tempt the wild robbers of the desert; there was a long journey over desolate tracts where the exposure would be utter and help far off, so as human help was concerned; and the company were not armed, or very partially; not men of war; a mere

easy prey to Arab freebooters, if any such swept down upon them."

"Then I do not see why Ezra did not ask a convoy of the king," said Liph. "He could have had it."

"Oh, I see why he would not!" I exclaimed. "Liph, he had told the king that their God took care of all that trusted him; now should he ask the king for soldiers, and so prove that he did not believe what he said?"

Liph indulged himself with a low whistle. "At *that* rate" said he.

"What?"

"I thought it was proper to take precautions anyhow; and most people act upon that principle."

"But here the honour of God was concerned. What would Artaxerxes think?"

"Well, Ezra was afraid."

"He had good reason to be afraid; the journey was full of danger. So much more honour to his faith, which would not ask help of man, and to his loyalty, which would not dishonour the name of his God. Before they set out, there in their encampment, they all fasted and prayed and begged the Lord to be their protector. Then Ezra put the money and the precious vessels into the hands of certain persons, who would be responsible for their safe keeping; and the twelfth of the month the caravan set forward."

"Eight thousand people would make a pretty large caravan!"

"A sufficient mark for freebooters. Yes, a long, long line of camels must have crept up along the bank of the Euphrates and taken its course across the desert; a long line, visible enough at a great distance to the sharp eyes of Arabs; and every night, when the halt was made and the suppers were cooked, a great number of grey columns of smoke must have risen into the sky. But the good hand of their God was upon them; no enemy came near; the desert was passed, and the journey was continued down *through* the valley of Cœle-Syria; and the first day of the

fifth month, in midsummer, the lines of camels filed slowly into Jerusalem !”

“By the northern gate, I suppose?”

“It could have been by no other.”

“Then there were three days that they did nothing. Talked, I suppose, all the time.”

“Rested,” said Uncle Sam. “Well they might ; for the fatigue and hardship of such a four months was not a small matter. Rested three days. The fourth day the gifts were solemnly handed over to the authorities of the Temple ; and the thanksgiving sacrifices were presented next ; the king’s letters were delivered to the satraps and governors round about, and their favour and co-operation made sure of.”

“They offered sacrifices ‘for all Israel,’” said Dan.

“Ay, they would not regard the people as other than a whole ; the remnant stood for the entire nation.”

“I understand the twelve bullocks, for the twelve tribes ; I do *not* understand the ninety-six rams or the seventy-seven lambs.”

“Ninety-six is eight times twelve, and seventy-seven is what is called ‘the intensified seven.’ This burnt-offering meant to say that the people of Israel and all its tribes, at least as there represented, were wholly the Lord’s. And now Ezra was free to set about the business he had come for ; ‘to inquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem ;’ to regulate all disorders, and bring the community into thorough conformity with the law, restoring the old polity and the old ordinances. Just when the time of chapter ix. begins we are not told ; it might well enough be a few weeks after his arrival, for there had been a good deal to do. Now, he was in the Temple one day, perhaps formally beginning his inquiries ; and some of the nobles came to him with information of worse irregularities than even he had feared.”

“I don’t see exactly what they meant,” said Priscilla. “Did they mean that the people were going back into idolatry ?”

"It would infallibly lead to that in the end ; but the present complaint was, that the Jews were marrying heathen women. All classes had done this and were doing it ; nobles and common people, and even the priests, alike."

"That does not seem anything so very bad," said Liph.

"It was forbidden. See Exod. xxxiv. 12-16 ; Deut. vii. 1-4."

"That is not according to our notions nowadays, sir."

"It is quite according to New Testament notions, if you mean that. Read 2 Cor. vi. 14-18."

"I know," said Liph. "We have read that before. But it does not seem to me to agree with our notions of liberality. Every man has a right to his own opinion, and so has every woman."

"It is hardly worth while to answer you, boy," said my uncle. "I will just remark that neither man nor woman has a right to disbelieve God, or to disobey Him."

"Suppose he cannot believe, sir ?"

"Then it must be because 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God : for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Let him become obedient, and he will be able to believe fast enough."

"But in the matter of marrying these women—I should think it would be a good way of getting them converted."

"Converted to what ?"

"Why to Christianity, sir. Or, in the case of those Jews, to Judaism."

"There are several things to be said about that. One is, that if you are a disobedient Christian, the Lord does not want more of your sort. Another thing is, that in your disobedience you have lost your purchase upon the conscience of the other person whom you ought to convert. And yet, a third is, that on a side hill, it is easier to pull down than to pull up. Ezra knew better than you know what these inter-marriages betokened, and what they surely led to. If the people, the remnant, after all God's goodness and severity, were engaged in flat disobedience again,

already, it showed how little truth or loyalty there was in them. And if this thing went on, the idolatry for which they, as a nation, had once been destroyed, would surely bring them into another destruction from which there would be no remnant to return. Ezra was thrown into utter dismay, and sat plunged in grief and fear, without speaking a word, for hours ; while by degrees there gathered round him a company of others who felt as he did. Perhaps they had conferred together in private about the matter before ever bringing it to his notice, and now were there all of them to hear what he would say or do. They sat down in the Temple court, a group of mourning and troubled men, silent, and with their garments rent. And probably word of the thing began to get about, and numbers gathered to the Temple about the time of evening sacrifice ; for all Israel was more or less implicated, and fear and trembling began to come into the hearts of men. Then, at the time of evening sacrifice, Ezra arose, tore his garment and mantle yet further, fell on his knees and prayed. Read his prayer."

"Sir," said Liph, "these words which he quotes from the prophets, they are not what we read?"

"No, not exactly. Ezra quoted the command, not the exact words of it. A command which had been emphasised by the rebukes and denunciations of the prophets since Moses, and so is referred to them generally. By the time he had finished his prayer the Temple courts were crowded ; and half in repentant sorrow, half perhaps in the sorrow of natural affection, knowing what was coming upon them, people broke down, and the weeping was terrible."

"Why did Ezra pull out his hair?"

"It was a sign of very incensed moral indignation."

"And what does he mean by 'a nail in his holy place,' verse 8?"

"A nail, or a peg, in a wall, is something to hang clothes or other things upon. Now the restored Temple, to the remnant of Jews, was a pin on which to hang their hopes and their reliance."

"But how had the kings of Persia 'given them a wall in Judah?' the wall was not built yet."

"Figurative language. The protection and help of the kings was as a wall of defence to the little restored community."

"And the men around were weeping because of the wives they would have to put away?"

"Some of them. Some of them no doubt with pure religious sorrow, like Ezra's own; but in the most cases poor human feeling made itself known. Why not? It was very hard for even Abraham to send away Hagar and Ishmael, and these men were not Abrahams, while they loved their wives and children equally well. The end of it was that one man stood forth as spokesman for the assembly, and proposed a thorough reform. Ezra was encouraged, and entered into a covenant with all present that it should be done; and an assembly was appointed for the third day thereafter; which every man of the Jews was summoned to attend, on pain of excommunication and confiscation of all his property. It was a sad three days in Judah for many a family! heart-breaking partings and desolate hearth-stones were in prospect; and men and women and children ate the bread of tears together."

"I think it was dreadful!" said Priscilla.

"No doubt of that."

"Uncle Sam, was it *necessary*?"

"It is necessary to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye, if hand or eye cause one to sin."

"Couldn't they keep their wives and children and yet keep true?"

"Some might. But most certainly the nation could not, if the nation went into these alliances. And no man could know of himself, that beginning with one disobedience he might not go on into another. A servant of God, whether an ancient Jew or a modern Christian, cannot allow himself to tamper with evil. 'Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord.'"

"It was about this time of year," said Dan, "when that

assembly was held. All the Jews ! The city over there must have been full."

"There were not so many of them yet, but that there was room enough. It was one of the strange scenes that place has seen, undoubtedly. December it was, and the rain coming down as it is doing at this moment ; pouring heavily, and cold ; and the people stood or sat in the open space to the east or south-east of the Temple courts, trembling with the bodily and mental discomfort which that day mingled together. Trembling with misery. And yet, so changed was the people's temper since the days before the exile, that they shrank more from God's displeasure than from the suffering of breaking up their families ; so that when Ezra had presented the matter before them the answer was unanimous and decided ; 'with a loud voice.' But, they represented, it 'was impossible for them all to stand there in the rain while all the cases were heard and disposed of ; and they proposed that the nobles and officers should be a commission to do the work, and that those men who had taken heathen wives should come and appear before them in turn, make confession, and do according to the commandment."

"And it took the commission two months," said Dan. "What is this about Jonathan the son of Asahel ?"

"He opposed the decision, he and others ; but those were the only voices raised to protest. Then follows the list of those who put away their heathen wives."

"Did they ever fall into the same temptation again ?"

"Very soon they did. Nehemiah found such cases in the country only twenty-five or thirty years later."

"It is strange !" said I.

"It is not so very strange. The returned exiles had been long living among heathen neighbours ; the Jews left in the land had mingled with the heathen around them. Evil communications corrupt good manners."

The rain, *our* rain, was pouring down heavy and thick. I looked through its grey veil towards the city which I could hardly see. How long, long ago the day of that

December convention ! how the people who had obeyed trembling then, and at such a cost, wandered from God and from the truth nevertheless, in other ways, till they destroyed themselves ! Then the city was struggling up from its desolation, and the new Temple was built, and hopes were high. Now, the Mohammedan Mosque of Omar held the sacred place, and not a single Jew owned a house in Jerusalem !

"Is it for ever, Uncle Sam ?" I asked. "Is the desolation for ever ?"

"My child, no ! But until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

"When will that be ?"

"I cannot tell. When the gospel of the kingdom has been preached in all the world, when perilous times have come, and iniquity shall abound, and the love of many shall wax cold ; men shall be lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God ; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof ; there shall be a falling away from the truth and a great manifestation of the power of wickedness ;—*then* some day, there will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And I wish He would come, Tiny !"

"And then will the Jews believe ?"

"The Scripture says they will 'look on Him whom they pierced,' and will mourn then for Him with a very great mourning."

"Uncle Sam, I think Ezra was a very fine fellow."

"Noble and faithful. And of Nehemiah the same is true ; with all the more striking effect because he was a courtier very high in office, and a man of great wealth, which he had accumulated in his lofty position. We will talk about him to-morrow. And to-morrow, I think, we must move into warmer quarters."

CHAPTER XII.

NEHEMIAH'S WALL.

I REGRETTED our tents ; however, perhaps Uncle Sam was right, for the weather was cold. We took up our lodging next day in a house in Jerusalem ; not a hotel, but a house where there was plenty of spare room, and the people were glad to have us, to make a little money. We had no reading for several days. It took a little while to get settled and to get accustomed to our new way of life. Then, Uncle Sam called us one afternoon up to the roof of the house, from which we could look over all Jerusalem and up to the Mount of Olives. It was a sunny interval between rains ; and our new position had the advantage of a new point of view. There was an 'upper chamber' too, built on part of the roof, to which we could resort in a rainy time and still have the view. We all enjoyed the place, and the outlook over the roofs of the houses ; and for awhile we could hardly settle to our reading, we were so busy looking and finding out localities.

"The words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah," Liph began reading.

"Rather his history," said my uncle. "So the Hebrew means."

"—'In the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year'—"

"About December, and thirteen years after Ezra's going to Jerusalem."

"—'Hanani, one of my brethren came'—"

"Several Jewish travellers arrived in Susa, and among them a brother of the king's cup-bearer. What was the particular occasion of their coming cannot be known ; and does not matter. Nehemiah, being a true Jew and a true

patriot, as well as a faithful servant of God, was curious to hear details about the condition of things at home. And what he heard distressed him."

"How were they 'in great affliction and reproach'? I thought Ezra had carried letters from the king giving them a great deal of favour."

"You must take into consideration that the returned exiles were but a small company, with heathen enemies all round them. The walls of the city, which Nebuzaradan had broken down, lay in their ruins; of course the place was utterly defenceless. And so long as it lay so, the people would prefer to dwell in the country villages; and did actually shun making Jerusalem their place of abode. The city could not be built up, could not thrive in any way; and remained a subject of contempt and reproach to the neighbours, who despised the returned remnant as well as hated them."

"Why should they hate them? I don't see."

"A separate people; a peculiar people; following their own exclusive laws and customs, and in the course of such following rarely privileged. Moreover claiming to be the only people of God."

"But as to the walls," said Liph. "Surely Nehemiah must have known that the walls were down."

"His attention maybe was never before called to the fact and its necessary consequences. Those were not the days of railroads and telegraph wires. To all intents and purposes, Palestine was a very distant land. Then Nehemiah had known, a few years before, of Ezra's journey and the full powers he took with him; he had hoped good things and great things; and now this news came, greatly disappointing. I suppose Nehemiah felt what is described in the 80th psalm."

We read that psalm, and then we read Nehemiah's prayer; and Priscilla asked what sins he was confessing?

"No late ones or new ones, child. But this fallen condition could only have come upon the chosen people through their own fault; and that it continued was a standing

testimony to their fault. Nehemiah went to the root of the matter, like a true believer."

"Then what did he want mercy in the king's sight for?"

"That he might get a favourable answer to his petition."

"He thought, that by praying to God he could get the king's favour to let him go to Jerusalem?"

"Not only he thought it, Liph, but the fact was according to his thought. He did get what he asked for."

"Can people get whatever they want, then?"

"A certain class of people can. They are those who are wholly the Lord's and who trust Him as thoroughly as they love Him. But then, Liph, those people never want what you want; they never want their own way."

"What is the use of having anything else?" said Liph.

"You would not know now if I were to tell you. Let us go on with Nehemiah. He got all he asked for."

"He waited a long while before he spoke to the king," said Dan. "Three months!"

"He might have lacked a good opportunity before that. The king might have been pre-engaged, or absent, or indisposed. It was a ticklish request he had to make, you must remember. Nehemiah was a courtier high in office, in a very confidential position. To be the king's cup-bearer, was an honour not to be granted but to a man the king was very sure of. Now to ask to be relieved from duty and sent on a private mission which would keep him away for a long time, might be very displeasing; in case the king's trust was not full, it might be very dangerous. Artaxerxes Longimanus was an easy-tempered monarch, it is true; but under the Persian kings every noble and courtier held his life by a thread; and the thread of royal favour was easily broken. So it was not till one day in the lovely month of Nisan, that Nehemiah got his courage screwed to the sticking point, or saw his opportunity. You can fancy the king and queen seated at table, on their golden couches; the noble pillars of the Great Hall perhaps about them; pavement of malachite and mother of pearl and agate under

the tables, and the hangings of royal white and blue stretched between the pillars to ward off the sun's direct rays ; while from the broad plains overlooked by the platform of the palace buildings came the most delicious airs of spring, and smell of lemon and orange flowers mixed with the breath of the Persian roses. Behind the king stood his cup-bearer, ready to pour him out the wine of Helbon when he desired it ; and water of the Choaspes was there, for the king drank no other ; it was esteemed so clear and sweet, that it was taken along for the king's use even when he went to a distance on warlike expeditions. I can fancy that Nehemiah chose a time when he was as nearly as possible alone with the king ; but even so, he was troubled, and his face showed it, and it had never been his custom to wait upon the king in his office with a clouded face. Nehemiah was a favoured personage, for the king condescended to notice his trouble, and to question him about it. Then Nehemiah 'prayed to the God of heaven.'

"And so he got all he wanted," said I.

"It seems Nehemiah wanted an escort, if Ezra did not," remarked Liph.

"Nehemiah had a guard of honour, which was to remain with him. He was appointed governor, or pasha, of the country ; and the escort belonged to his dignity."

"Now, Uncle Sam, who were these enemies of his ?"

"Sanballat the Horonite must have been an inhabitant of one of the Beth-horons ; therefore a Samaritan. Tobiah was probably an office-holder under the king of Persia, in the country of the Ammonites. These two were prominent men among their respective peoples ; and Tobiah was connected with respectable Jewish families, his own wife and his son's wife being from them. He was even connected somehow with the high priest Eliashib ; and it has been thought, from the pure Jewish names held by both him and his son, that he was descended from an Israelitish ancestry which had settled in the land of the children of Ammon. So trouble was preparing for Nehemiah. Perhaps he was

more or less aware of it ; for you see he set about his work very quietly."

"One thing first. He had an order for timber for the wall?"—

"For the gates, which are part of the wall."

"And for *the palace which belonged to the house* ; what palace was that?"

"Read rather, for the *citadel* which belonged to the Temple. This is the first mention of such a building. The purpose of it was the defence of the Temple ; and it communicated with the Temple courts on the north-west. Herod the Great rebuilt it and called it Antonia, after Mark Antony."

"Then also Nehemiah meant to build a house for himself ; 'the house that I shall enter into'?"

"As pasha, certainly. He must have a house, and he kept high state in it. But now he began his operations very quietly. He rested three days, like Ezra and his company. Then, by night, accompanied only by some attendants on foot, he set forth, on his mule probably, to go round the city and see for himself the state of the walls. He went out by the gate in the western wall near the present Jaffa gate ; that is, by the opening where the valley gate used to stand ; went from there southerly along the Gihon valley. No doubt he had a moon to light him ; and under its quiet white light he observed the tumble-down heaps, the standing portions of the wall, the work of the fire which had destroyed the gates so many years ago. Years have a strange way of telling their story ; and as Nehemiah went on he could read it ; the long, long desolation ; the once strength and beauty ; the entireness of the overthrow. And how about the restoration ? You can fancy him, cannot you, going softly around, while all Jerusalem was still in sleep, feeling sorrow and gladness sharply as he took this first view of the city of David, the city of his fathers, and considered with himself how the work of re-establishing it was to be done. He went on to the gate of the fountain, and the king's pool ; the fountain

gate must have been near the pool of Siloam over there to the south. There the heaps of rubbish became so confused and piled up that it was not possible any longer to get through except on his own feet ; so he dismounted, and went on along 'by the brook ;' that is, up the valley Kedron ; there is no brook ; viewing the wall, and so round by the north, till he entered at the valley gate again. Nobody knew what he had been about, or what he purposed doing ; and to rebuild the walls was a very great undertaking, children, with the men and means at command. Nehemiah is a capital example of the truth of the old proverb—'Where there's a will there's a way.' The next thing he did was to call a council. He was ready now ; he knew for himself how things were ; and now he brought forward his plan, told the people his story, and inspired them so with his spirit that they rose at once to the occasion. 'Let us rise up and build !' they said. So they began preparations."

"Did Sanballat come then, to see what they were doing ?"

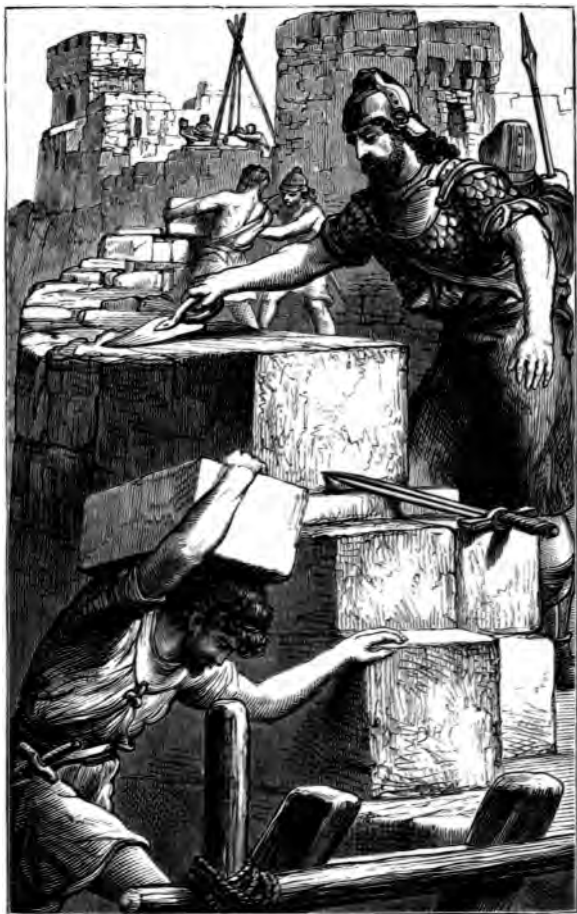
"To see and to hinder."

"Who is this Geshem the Arabian ?"

"He must have been a chief of an Arab tribe ; these latter were not wont to be maliciously unfriendly to the Jews ; but here they joined with the Ammonites and the Ashdodites. These men, chiefs or governors, tried to weaken the hands of the Jews by their scornful incredulity. 'Will ye rebel ? you little mean handful of men without a barrier to defend your city ?' And Nehemiah's answer is very dignified in its rebuke. Ah, children, there is another city to be built up ; and there are builders, and there are men who will not build ; and these 'have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.'"

"Now, Uncle Sam, tell us where they built the new wall."

"Beyond question, on the site of the old. And they began at the sheep gate. Look at your maps. The sheep gate was on the east side, a little north of the Temple



NEHEMIAH'S WALL.



courts; near St. Stephen's gate. The Arabs still bring sheep into the city through St. Stephen's gate; and there is no doubt but so used sheep to come by the sheep gate in old time. At this place the priests took up the work; they restored the towers, and built the stretch of wall extending northward 'unto the tower of Hananeel.' They set up the doors of the gate too, but though mentioned here, that was not done till the whole wall was finished."

"How could they 'sanctify' it?"

"By prayer and giving it to God."

"Ought we not to sanctify everything so?" I asked.

"The time is coming, when 'every pot in Jerusalem shall be holiness to the Lord.'"

"If you give *everything* to God, you will have nothing for yourself," said Liph.

"You are not yourself your own," said my uncle. "And that same thought you have just spoken is one of the devil's lies. The Lord said, 'He that loseth his life for My sake, *shall find it.*' You will not believe it; but it is true."

"Where was the tower of Hananeel?" Prissy asked.

"It must have been at the north-east corner. At that place the men of Jericho carried on the repairs. Three hundred and forty-five men of Jericho had come back with Zerubbabel. Their descendants worked at the wall between the corner and the fish gate, and the rest of that stretch was completed by Zaccur the son of Imri. We know nothing more of him, but his name stands here fast, as one of the builders of Jerusalem. So might my name stand!"

"Uncle Sam, the people all builded, didn't they?"

"No, Tiny. Some shunned the trouble, and some did not like the work, and others did not care about it. The work wanted them all. The fish gate was in the north wall, some distance from the corner. It got its name most likely from a fish-market near by, to which the men of Tyre brought fish. The next three stretches, going on westward, were repaired by three men, whom we may suppose to have been men of means. One of them, however, Meshullam, had given his daughter in marriage to the son of Tobiah."

"Maybe he couldn't help it, sir."

"In those days, and in that race, daughters, and sons too, obeyed their parents. Meshullam could have helped it. Yet he helped build the wall. There is work and work on the Lord's building; and some work will stand, and some will not."

"Did not Meshullam's work stand, sir?"

"So far as brick and mortar, or stone and mortar, went, I have no doubt of it. How the work stands written down in the Lord's great account book, is another matter, and certainly not our concern. Next to them, the men of Tekoa builded. But their chief men would not stoop to the work."

"How could they 'put their necks' to the work?"

"As draught oxen bear a yoke, and pull in it. The 'old gate,' verse 6, is supposed to mean, gate of the old wall. You remember, Joash king of Israel had destroyed a long stretch of the city wall to the north-west. When this was at last built up again, it made a new piece, called the 'broad wall.' The men of Gibeon and the men of Mizpah are mentioned next, as working at adjoining portions; as neighbours naturally would. Their portions reached to the locality of the governor's court; that is, where the pasha of the countries west of Euphrates held court, on occasion of his coming to Jerusalem. The goldsmiths worked at the next bit, and beyond them the apothecaries. You know, in the East, trades are almost hereditary; carried on from father to son; so the guilds are very uniform and persistent. These parties carried the repairing as far as the before-mentioned stretch of 'broad wall.' The gate of Ephraim was at this point; for you recollect Joash had the wall broken down four hundred cubits, from the gate of Ephraim to the corner gate. Now there is no mention of rebuilding the gate of Ephraim; whence it is inferred that this gate had been left standing. The marginal reading in verse 8 is, 'and they *left* Jerusalem unto the broad wall;' that would be because just there a stretch of wall and the gate of Ephraim had remained standing. Next come

various names of builders of the next following stretches of wall. Rephaiah, verse 9, was ruler over half the district of Jerusalem. Jedaiah built the wall opposite his own dwelling. The tower of the furnaces was between the broad wall and the valley gate, perhaps close beside the corner gate, which is not spoken of here but is spoken of elsewhere. The tower of the furnaces may have served to secure it and save it from destruction. Then Shallum, the ruler of the other half district of Jerusalem, 'he *and his daughters*.' There is an example for you, Tiny. The valley gate was near where the present Jaffa gate is, and the dung gate somewhere at the south-western corner of Zion."

"Next mentioned is the fountain gate."

"And the wall of the pool of Siloam, which was in the valley between Zion and Ophel. The wall of the pool by the king's garden would be the adjoining stretch. You know where 'the king's garden' was. The stairs that go down from the city of David are not found yet; the place of them, I mean."

"Uncle Sam, they had a great way round to go!"

"Tiny, it was a very large undertaking, with the men and means at command, and in the circumstances."

"Then where are the places mentioned in verse 16?"

"The sepulchres of David were in the city of David. The wall spoken of here must have been along the eastern side of Zion."

"Up here, on the west of the Tyropæon," said Liph, looking on the map. "But this is before they came to the pool of Siloam. The pool of Siloam is on the other side of that Tyropæon valley, or the mouth of it; on the south-west foot of Ophel."

"True. And I cannot explain away the difficulty. The stretch of wall we are speaking of now was, at any rate, on Zion, going northward from its south-east angle; being possibly a second enclosure, fortifying the hill of Zion, and within the other. The 'armoury' stood at a turn of the wall. The house of the high priest was further to the north."

So we come by and by to the king's palace and a high tower that stood out from it. The king's house had been over against the Temple, on the north-east side of the hill of Zion. The court of the prison was formed by some of the buildings belonging to the king's house, and the high tower was part of the citadel. See Micah iv. 8, where that tower is spoken of. Just here the wall took a turn and went east, across the Tyropæon, to Ophel."

"But the king's house was not standing now."

"The ruined remains of the tower might well be there. Or even, for purposes of defence, it might be that the tower had been built up. Probably, for it is again and again referred to. Verse 26 tells us that the Temple servants, the Nethinims, dwelt in Ophel, as far as a point opposite the great outlying tower; that is, on the other side of the Tyropæon valley; and the men of Tekoa repaired the wall running from the tower angle to that point. The water gate was not that by which the priest came to fetch water from the pool of Siloam in the Feast of Tabernacles: that was in the court of the Temple; yet this must have been hereabouts somewhere in the south wall, above the wide open space formed by the valley of Hinnom before it joins the valley of Jehoshaphat. You need not trouble yourselves to follow the work of the builders more minutely; in general, they went round the circuit of Ophel, and from there up along the east side of the city, till they came to the sheep gate. That was the point where we began."

"Uncle Sam, were those walls where the walls of Jerusalem stand to-day?"

"Not precisely. On the east and the west, you know the two valleys of Kedron and Gihon hem the city in; the walls on those two lines must be near the old limits. On the north, the wall of Nehemiah was not very far from the place of the walls now; except at the corners, where it was not carried out quite so far. On the south, the line was different. It took in the whole hill of Zion. You know the modern wall cuts across the middle of the hill, leaving the sepulchres of the kings outside. They used to be within

the wall. The whole hill of Ophel too was surrounded by the wall."

"When were these walls built?"

"A.D. 1542."

"Fifteen hundred forty-two!" cried Dan. "That is very modern. But after Titus threw the old walls down, who first built them up?"

"The emperor Adrian A.D. 136. We will talk of that again. Come now back to Nehemiah."

"Uncle Sam, I should like to go all round the walls."

"We will do it, the first fitting day. You have got a notion, in the meantime, of what was accomplished by Nehemiah; but you do not know how it was done. It was done amid difficulties. Read Neh. iv. 1-6."

"The anger of Sanballat and Tobiah did not amount to anything," said Liph. "Words don't hurt."

"Oh, don't they?" said Dan.

"They have power to dishearten sometimes," said Uncle Sam; "and they were here the indication of a feeling which would not stop with words. The burnt limestone, you must know, would be crumbly and unfit for use; so Sanballat scornfully asked where the poor Jews would get material; 'will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish which are burned?' and Tobiah suggested that the foot of a jackal would be enough to break down what they built; it would be so weak."

"But, Uncle Sam, Nehemiah prays that the Lord would not forgive them?"

"That is the inevitable fate of hardened rebellion, not to be forgiven. These men were hardened rebels; their reproach should be turned upon their own head. The Jews went on with their work, until they had brought up the wall all round to half its proper height. Then the Jews' enemies on all sides conspired to stop them. The Samaritans in the north, the men of Ashdod in the west, the Arabians perhaps from the south, and the Ammonites on the east. News came to Jerusalem that they might at any time expect a sudden onfall. Men arrived from different portions of the

country, saying that their brethren who had come up to work on the wall must all return home ; they were needed to guard their families and their possessions ; and the people's hearts at last failed. You see, when they were obliged to set a watch day and night, the labour was greatly increased, and anxiety and fear made it still more heavy. And then many voices arose to say the work could not be done ; the heaps of rubbish remaining to be cleared away were still so great ; and the bearers of burdens were already tired. The work ceased. Nehemiah posted the people with arms in their hands to be ready for an attack, if one came ; and they waited. Nehemiah bidding them not fear, God would fight for them."

"And so He did," said I.

"The attack never came," said Liph.

"Well, because the Lord fought for them."

"Because their enemies knew they were on their guard, sir ?"

"Take it so ; how came it that their plans were hindered till the Jews had time to be on their guard ? The Lord works by means, and so people often think He is not working. However, from this time the people could not lay down their arms again. The builders wrought with their swords at their sides ; the porters held a weapon in one hand and a hod or a burden of some sort in the other. Nehemiah's body-guard and retainers were divided in two portions which relieved each other, one working at the wall and one standing to arms ; and beside the governor himself stood his trumpeter to blow an alarm if need there were. The people from the country were requested not to leave the city by night ; and when anybody lay down to rest he lay down in his clothes and with his arms near him. And so, by degrees the work was done ; the wall was all built, and the fair lines of defence again girdled the city ; to the joy of every patriot's heart."

"That is beautiful, Uncle Sam."

"Nehemiah was a grand man," said Daniel.

"He was a grand man," said my uncle ; "strong to do

right ; strong in faith ; indomitable in his work ; a *righteous* man, every inch of him. Not only a true patriot, who would risk and dare for his fatherland ; but a true servant of God, not to be corrupted and not to be lured to selfish ends. Go on and see what new proof of this you find in the next chapter."

"I suppose his own house was not built yet?" said L.

"Of course not."

"But he kept a good deal of state?" said Liph.

"As became him. He was pasha of the country. We may imagine him wearing the Persian flowing robe, and soft cap ; with gold chain and rich seal no doubt, and elegant walking-stick. But this governor oppressed nobody ; sought not his own advantage ; on the contrary, fed and supplied numbers of others from his own store. Read Dan. ch. v."

"Was this afterwards?" Dan asked when he had read a few verses ; "or was it while the wall was building?"

"It was while the wall was going on. There arose 'a great cry of the people'—a cry of the poor against the rich ; and it was a justified cry. It was a demand for bread. There were three sets of complainants. One set was composed of the utterly poor people ; people who had no means of their own ; the work of the wall took all their time and labour, and they asked for corn to eat while they were doing it. Another class of people, originally better off, declared that they had been obliged to mortgage their lands ; and now they had no private means of subsistence. A third set complained that for the payment of the king's tribute they also had been forced to pledge their lands or their crops, and so they had nothing to live upon ; and some of their children were in bondage and service ; and yet, as they truly stated, they were of the same blood with their richer brethren who oppressed him."

"How did they oppress them?"

"Lent them money on interest."

"That is what *we* call helping a fellow," said Liph.

"A Hebrew called it oppression."

"But was it oppression?"

"See Exod. xxii. 25. From a Hebrew to a Hebrew it was oppression."

"Usury!" cried Liph, reading. "Of course, *usury*; but you said interest."

"From a Hebrew to a Hebrew interest was usury. See Ezek. xviii. 8, 17."

"Sir, ought he to let him have it *without* interest?"

"I will answer your question by another. Would you ask interest from Dan, if you had money to lend him, and he needed to borrow?"

Liph hesitated, but answered "No."

"The Hebrew was the Hebrew's brother. Even so as Christians are brethren now, only the latter is in an intensified degree."

"But Christians take interest of one another, Uncle Sam."

"My boy, Christians do not, as a body, recognise their relationship. Where the love is not felt, it is not acted upon. But the Master's rule is, 'That ye love one another, even as I have loved you.' 'We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.' 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you'—and so on."

"I should like to know what would become of a man's property, or business, then; if he went upon such a principle."

"Anybody can find out, by trying," said Uncle Sam. "But I hardly think Nehemiah, if he were among us in these days, would be satisfied with our ways. I can fancy I hear him saying—'It is not good that ye do; ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God, because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?'"

"What did he mean by his words in the eighth verse?"

"Just what he said. He and others had paid out their money to buy back their brethren who were in bondage to heathen masters; and now here at home their own people were putting like bondage upon them. In the next verses, what he proposes is, that the things given to pledge shall be given back, and all claim to interest on the money lent shall be simply relinquished. The poor people should get

back their lands and their vineyards and their olive-trees and their houses, and no bonus be asked on the loan."

"Uncle Sam, he told them to give back only the hundredth part?"

"That was the interest, my dear; the one per cent., payable probably every month."

"One per cent. a month is pretty heavy," said Liph.

"So it was. And see the law? Exod. xxii. 25; Lev. xxv. 36."

"Then Nehemiah goes on to tell how *he* treated the people."

"He declared himself free from any self-seeking advantage. He had not preached what he did not practise. All the time of his government he drew no taxes or contributions from the people, as former rulers had done; 'the bread of the Pechah' was not asked for; he and his servants never used their opportunity to buy up lands, as they might have done; he and his servants had given themselves freely to the work of the wall; and in addition to all that, Nehemiah's daily hospitality was of the most princely kind. One hundred and fifty of the 'rulers' of the Jews, heads of houses, were daily entertained at his table; besides all who came from other countries, visitors, who were tarrying in Jerusalem."

"The 'bread of the Pechah,' then, was the governor's dues."

"Which all other governors had received."

"Uncle Sam, governors are called 'pashas' still in those countries."

"Ay," said Uncle Sam. "The name has come down."

CHAPTER XIII.

ROUND THE CITY.

ONE clear, sweet winter day we set out to review the walls. An excursion was very welcome, as we had been lately a good deal shut up. First of all, Uncle Sam took us to the citadel of Jerusalem ; he had an order from the governor granting us permission ; and there we went to the top of the Tower of David. The view from the top of the tower is very fine. Standing there, Uncle Sam tried to give us some knowledge of the course of the ancient walls.

"The first wall," he said, "surrounded the height of Zion. This was the strong part of the city, having deep ravines on all sides of it. Now at the north-west corner, near the angle of this wall, Herod the Great built a very strong tower, which he named after a friend he had lost."

"I know ; Hippicus," said Liph. "Mr. Porter tells about it in the handbook. And this is it, isn't it, sir ?"

"Herod's very tower ? Can it be ?" I asked.

"Let us look at it," said my uncle. "Herod built the tower, it is said, of big stones, and quite solid for forty-five feet of its height. Above that part there was a cistern, and above that again dwelling rooms for the soldiers. Now we are assured that Titus spared that tower, along with two others. Of course, as Mr. Porter remarks, Adrian when he built up the city would naturally make use of these strong towers for his new citadel. Then when the Mohammedans again broke down the city walls in the thirteenth century, this citadel, called at that time the castle of David, was again left standing."

"And this is it ?" I inquired anew.

"Let us go down and look at it from the outside."

So we went down. And we saw that the lower part was

built of great stones, with the old "bevelling," as Uncle Sam called it; he says it is solid for forty feet of its height, and formed partly of the very foundation rock itself; higher up, the walls are evidently modern. We examined it well, and then went up to the top again to take further views.

"Certainly, this would seem to be Herod's tower," said Dan.

"But the bevelled stones forming the base of it date further back," said my uncle. "This sort of masonry is not known anywhere except where Hebrew kings have held rule; and belongs to some of the oldest remains. We shall see it in the foundations of the Temple area, in the wall near the Damascus gate, in the old mosque at Hebron and the buildings at Baalbec. But I suppose there is little doubt but we are standing above the foundations upon which Herod built up his tower of Hippicus. That was at the north-west angle of the wall of Zion, the first wall. Let us see if we can trace the course of the rest of it. The wall ran east from this point, along the brow of the height, and crossed the Tyropæon valley to the western Temple wall. Then on the other hand it went southerly from Hippicus, skirting the height on the west and curving round so as to take in the whole hill of Zion, crossed the Tyropæon to the southern point of the ridge of Ophel, and so up to join the south-east corner of the Temple area."

"That is clear enough," said Dan.

"Then within this northern wall, extending quite across from the brink of the Tyropæon valley to the western declivity of the hill, you must imagine the royal palaces of the kings. For there Herod's palace stood, and no doubt it was built on the old place of Solomon's houses. Herod's palace is described as most luxurious and splendid; a succession of pillared courts and halls, connected at the east with a great public place of assemblies, called the Xystus; a great open place, pillared and cloistered, stretching along the eastern edge of Zion above the Tyropæon valley, and communicating with the Temple courts by a bridge on high

arches thrown over the valley. All over this ground, no doubt Solomon's house and halls of judgment extended."

"Only, when Nehemiah was here there was nothing."

"The remembrance, and the old sites ; we find some of them mentioned. Well, children, that was the first wall, enclosing Zion. That was only one part of the city. The second wall sprang from somewhere very near Hippicus, and swept north and east to the sight of the fortress north of the Temple, called in later days Antonia. Over yonder, to the north-east, not very far off, is the pool of Hezekiah, 'between two walls.'"

"I understand all that," said I.

"Then now we will go."

We descended again and went over the ridge of Zion, where in old time the city of David stood. Now the ground is rough with cactus and grass, and the Jews' quarter takes up part of the space. We went through the Jews' quarter ; and it was one of the sorrowfulest sights that could be seen. Here where the "city of David" was ! where Solomon's palaces rose in splendour ; where the house of the forest of Lebanon received audiences, and golden shields glittered upon the walls. And now it is dreadful to go through there. Such misery of sights and smells I never imagined before. We worked our way along, till we came to the brow of Zion, where we looked over to the opposite wall of the Temple area, and indeed partly looked over it, to the trees in the enclosure. Uncle Sam halted the party here, and made us observe the rough stones which at one spot in the great Haram wall project from the surface. "There began," he said, "the first arch of the viaduct which connected the hill of Zion with the Temple. On this side, in Herod's day, was the Xystus." We descended the slope, with some difficulty and a deal of disgust, and at last stood before the old stones of the arch. They were very plain to see, and we stood and wondered before them.

"This, where we stand, was once a deep and steep valley, running between Zion and Moriah, and further on

bending to the left and separating Zion from Acra, the 'lower city.' Through this valley it appears ran a tide of business ; and the lofty arches of the viaduct permitted the business to flow on unhindered, while it furnished a noble passage-way above from the upper city to the Temple courts."

"Do you think Solomon built it, sir?" asked Liph critically, viewing the stones of the arch.

"Look at the size of the stones. Then look at these lower courses of stones in the wall south of them. Do you see the bevelled joinings?"

"If they were bevelled, which I suppose they were," said Liph, examining, "they have been well worn down?"

"Undoubtedly."

"If there was a bridge here, Uncle Sam," said Priscilla, "what became of it?"

"What has become of the deep and steep valley beneath it? The bridge was broken down by the Romans, my dear, and the ruins of it and of the walls and other buildings have choked up the valley. Some of it is under ground, under our feet ; for the topmost courses falling in would preserve the lowest ones from all harm. Indeed ancient Jerusalem generally is under ground. Some day there will be excavations and discoveries. These bevelled large stones, Liph, are a sure sign of old Hebrew masonry, whether wrought by Phœnician builders or by others. As I told you, they are found nowhere outside the lands once under Hebrew monarchs. We shall see more of them as we go round the walls. Now we will go back to the Jaffa gate and begin regularly."

We went home to lunch first, and then found that we must defer any more travelling till next day. But the next day we took a fresh start.

"This [is *Bab-el-Khulil*," said Uncle Sam, as we passed out through the Jaffa gate.

"*Bab-el-Khulil*?" repeated Prissy.

"The Hebron gate ; so called by the name of Hebron. *El-Khulil* ; the Friend. You have Abraham's house

and blessing meeting you here in the very gate of Jerusalem."

"Where his children have forfeited all," said Dan.

"God hath not cast away His people whom He foreknew," my uncle answered. "'If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs.' And the heirs shall yet have the inheritance. And *they*, 'if they abide not in unbelief, shall be grafted in again,' into their own olive-tree. It is not for ever; 'and so all Israel shall be saved.'"

"Was there a gateway here in Nehemiah's time?"

"In high probability. Ruined as the city was by the Romans, it is likely that the sites of the old gates would be still known, and new gates built in the old places."

We went south for a way, and then turned the angle of the wall and crossed the ridge of Zion, where the wall crosses it.

"But Nehemiah's wall did not go here," said Liph.

"No, indeed. The old walls took in the whole of Zion. The beautiful city of the kings was where we are treading, in those days when Micah proclaimed to the proud and luxurious inhabitants, and proclaimed in vain, 'Zion shall be ploughed as a field.'"

"And so it is!" said Dan.

For most of the hill outside the walls now is in terraces and regularly tilled, and olive-trees grow here and there.

"I suppose the ancient Jerusalemites did not believe Micah," said I. "Yet here it is. And that other ridge, Ophel, was inside of Nehemiah's wall too, wasn't it?"

"Certainly. The Nethinim dwelt there."

We went on, till we came in due course to where the city wall strikes the foundation wall of the Temple area; thence eastward to the south-east angle. There we stopped, and my uncle made us notice the huge stones which are built in with smaller ones; out of place evidently, and belonging to a former state of things. Such stones lie untouched and in regular courses down below at the bottom where it rests upon the rock; of course we could not see *them*; but others have seen them.

"What big stones!" said Liph. "Twenty feet long. Why should the corners be better preserved than the other parts?"

"It is not altogether that. Many of these stones, as you can see, do not lie where the original builders placed them; but naturally, in rebuilding the wall, some of the best material was used for the corners. Then also perhaps there was a greater accumulation of ruins and rubbish at the corners, when the walls were thrown down, which would act as a better protection for the lower courses. Down below the surface there are courses so preserved and lying where Solomon's masons put them."

"How can you tell they were Solomon's masons, sir? They might have been Herod's."

"No, for the work is not Roman. The foundation for the Temple area was evidently one piece of work here; if Herod enlarged the area, it was at the north, and could not have been either at the east or west sides. Another thing, Liph, to be remarked in connection with the corners, is that the Jews seem to have given particular care to the construction of them and employed the finest blocks of stone. You remember the words, or Tiny does,—

"Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a *precious corner-stone*, a sure foundation.' And, 'Our daughters shall be as corner-stones, polished.'"

We went on, going now northwards, along the strip of ground east of the wall, where the Mohammedans have one of their burying places; it is full of their monuments, built together from the stones found lying about. It was a strange combination! On one side Solomon's stones; on the other hand the graves of the conquering race who have come in and possess the land. Here the Mohammedans bury their dead; on the other side of the Temple area the poor Jews get leave to come once a week and kiss the stones.

"Ay," said my uncle when I spoke of it;—"the words of the Lord by Moses are come true.—'The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high, and thou shall come down very low.'"

"Did Moses say that?" Liph asked.

"In the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy."

"If Nehemiah could have looked ahead, and seen these Mohammedan tombs beside his walls!" said I, "he would have lost all courage to do his work."

"Perhaps not," said Uncle Sam. "He whose trust is in God does not easily get discouraged. Look here, children."

What we were bade to look at was the end of a column, what had been a column once, built into the wall now and sticking out several feet from it. There were other broken columns built into the wall here; of porphyry and verde antique; showing a last trace of the magnificence which once adorned the Temple court, when the Lord walked there. On that projecting column, Uncle Sam said, the Moslems believe their prophet Mohammed will sit, as on a throne of judgment, when the peoples are gathered in the valley of Jehoshaphat.

"What makes them think they will be gathered in that place?"

"Scripture says so; gathered to judgment."

"Does it!" I exclaimed in great surprise.

"In more places than one."

"And will He, Uncle Sam? will the Lord judge them here?"

"Tiny, the Lord will do whatever He has said He will do. You and I do not doubt that."

"Where are those places in the Bible, sir?" Liph wanted to know.

"Joel iii. 12, and Zechariah xiv."

We went on and looked at the walled-up Golden Gate. That place, Uncle Sam said, shows traces of many hands that have had it in possession; which have accordingly built into it bits of their various styles of architecture; but he says also that here was undoubtedly one of the ancient entrances to the Temple courts, through which Christ must have gone when He entered or left the porch which was called Solomon's. Slowly passing northward, we saw the tower which marks the north-east corner of the Haram area, and

its great bevelled stones. On past St. Stephen's gate, and then we turned the corner of the city wall further north and went westwards. Here was the old place of danger and special defence for the ancient city, Uncle Sam said. On this side and the north-west came almost always the attacking armies. And the Damascus gate, it is likely enough, stands where the old gate of Ephraim used to stand; the entrance for all who approached the city by the great northern road.

We had passed through this gate again and again, but now we stopped to look at it more carefully; went through, and viewed the ancient masonry to be seen on the inside. Uncle Sam said, the reasonable conclusion is that this masonry is the remains of old gate towers which once guarded a gate in this place; in quite old times, that is; before Herod. Some of the great old stones, he said, it is evident lie where they were laid by the first builders; and that was very long ago. They are of the same date with the lower foundations of the Temple area and the springing stones of the arch, and the great mosque at Hebron.

Near the Damascus gate we changed our mode of procedure, and instead of going round the walls we mounted upon them, to complete the circuit so. The walls are from ten to fifteen feet thick, and inside the battlements runs a pathway all along on the top. From different places on the wall we got beautiful views, both of the city and the country, and occasionally we sat down to rest.

"Who built these walls?" Dan asked at one of those resting times.

"Sultan Suleiman, in 1542. Perhaps his work was much of it repair."

"But that is only a little more than three hundred years ago. Were there no walls before? or what walls?"

"To begin far back.—Titus left three great towers standing, along the northern brow of Zion, the whole western wall, and probably some houses; for a strong body of troops was left stationed here. Other people no doubt, Jews and Christians too, came in and occupied the ruins. We hear

no more of the city till Adrian's time ; about 130 A.D. He formed the design to rebuild and fortify it, as a means of holding the factious Jews in subjection. This at once fired their seditious spirit. It was abhorrent to the Jewish feeling that Gentiles should possess the city and set up their temples there ; and a most determined and furious rebellion broke out. It cost great effort and a terrible expenditure of Roman blood to put it down. Jewish blood of course flowed in streams. Thousands were afterwards sold as slaves at Abraham's oak near Hebron, and elsewhere ; and also, of course, as the rebels had seized Jerusalem, another siege and capture of the city was rendered inevitable. Then Adrian finished his purpose of rebuilding the city and fortifying it. He erected a temple to Jupiter on the site of the Temple of Solomon, and the place became wholly a heathen city and was called *Ælia*. The name of Jerusalem was forgotten ; and Jews were forbidden even to come near the spot, on pain of death."

"For how long, Uncle Sam !"

"For near two hundred years. In Constantine's time at last they received permission to enter the city once a year to weep over the glory that was gone."

"But what became then of Adrian's walls ?"

"They stood for awhile. By and by, as Christianity obtained the upper hand in the Roman empire, Jerusalem began again to be honoured and visited and held sacred. And then in A.D. 614, the city was taken by the Persians ; taken by storm, with much loss of life ; and for a few years the place remained under Persian rule. Heraclius conquered the Persians and re-entered Jerusalem. But only six or seven years passed before the Mohammedan army laid siege to the city anew ; and the Caliph Omar took it. He built a mosque on the site of the former Roman Temple and still former Jewish ; not yonder beauty ; that was a little later. And under Moslem rule the place remained from that time, till the year 1099.

"What happened then ?" I asked.

"Why, the first crusade," said Dan.

"Jerusalem was invested and taken again by storm. And blood again ran like water in the Temple enclosure ; this time the blood of the Moslem. For nearly a hundred years Jerusalem was in Christian hands."

"Then the Moslems got it back?"

"The Moslems, under Saladin. That was in A.D. 1187. The walls were afterwards destroyed ; and in A.D. 1542 Sultan Suleiman built these walls."

"Uncle Sam, it is a *dreadful* history."

"Ay. It is the history of disobedience. It is what Moses foretold. 'The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies : thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them ; and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.' . . 'Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look and fail with longing for them all the day long ; and there shall be no might in thine hand. The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up ; and thou shalt be only oppressed and crushed away.'"

"Just look at that Jews' quarter now !" said Priscilla.

"Uncle Sam, would it have been different if they had received Jesus when He came ?"

"Do you remember what He said ?—'If thou hadst known, even thou, *at least in this thy day*, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and they shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee ; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another ; *because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.*'"

"And now Zion is literally 'ploughed as a field,' " said I.

"And when Micah prophesied that, you know Zion was the strong part of the city, and the magnificent part ; covered with palaces and towers ; walled and fortified. Nothing could seem less likely than that a *plough* would pass over the ground there."

"And so they did not believe it. Yet they had reason enough to know that the Lord's words were true."

"They have still more reason at the present day, and yet they do not believe. How long they have been verifying those last words of the 28th of Deuteronomy!"

Dan found the chapter and read.

"'And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other;'—oh that is true, Uncle Sam; there is no place where there are not Jews;—'and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, wood and stone.' But I thought, after the Captivity, they gave up idolatry?"

"The remnant who returned. The great mass of the nation remained in the countries whither they had been carried away captive, and melted down into uniformity with the rest of the inhabitants."

"'And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest; but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind:'"—

"Stop there," said my uncle. "The history of centuries has been a literal fulfilling of those words. Driven from country to country, persecuted, banished, fleeing in destitution and fear, the Jews suffered under a universal bann. They were expelled from Spain, they were expelled from France. Edward I. banished them from England. One hundred and seventy thousand families, it is computed, were obliged to quit Spain; and Edward not only expelled the Jews, fifteen thousand of them, from the kingdom, but seized at the same time all their property; so that they went penniless. Go on, Dan."

"'And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life. In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. And the Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships,

by the way whereof I spoke unto thee, Thou shalt see it no more again ; and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.' Did *that* happen, Uncle Sam ?"

"Ninety-seven thousand, it is said, went into captivity after the destruction of the city by the Romans ; and it is told of them that they were so lightly valued that many of them remained unsold. Numbers of them were sent to Egypt."

"Yet the next thing in Micah, after that word about Zion being ploughed, is a promise of good and of glory," said Dan.

"And that shall come true too," said Uncle Sam.

"It has not yet ?"

"*Has* it ? We have not got to that point yet. But it is related of an old Jewish rabbi, Rabbi Akiba, that seeing a jackal coming out from where the Holy of Holies had been, while others wept he smiled. He took the fulfilment of one part of Micah's prophecy, you see, for a pledge of the other."

We sat on the wall and looked over the city. And then, standing up, we looked over the hills. Titus, and Hadrian, and Nebuchadnezzar, and Saladin, and the Persians ! Now the Moslem ! I thought of Isaiah's "How long ?" and of the Lord's answer. And then of the words, "But yet in it shall be a tenth." And I asked Uncle Sam.

"When will the tenth, the remnant, come back ?"

"I do not know, Tiny. Only, 'what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead ?' 'God is able to graft them in again,' and He will do it."

CHAPTER XIV.

READING THE LAW.

WE became very fond of our house-top. In a rainy day we went into the "upper chamber," from which we had a good look-out ; and whereas from the Mount of Olives we had viewed Jerusalem, now from Jerusalem we looked up to the Mount of Olives. Also we saw the city itself near at hand, and part of the city walls ; and I was never weary of the strange look-out over flat roofs. Our next reading began with the sixth chapter of Nehemiah.

"This goes back," said Dan.

"No," said my uncle ; "the things of this and of the preceding chapter all happened while the building of the walls was going on."

"I suppose," said I, "they worked all round the wall at once."

"On all parts of it, yes. So the work grew fast, and the enemies of the Jews were much concerned to hinder it if they could. They had tried intimidation, now they tried artifice. Four times Sanballat sent messengers to Nehemiah, proposing a meeting between them."

"What for ?"

"Mischief, Nehemiah says. Foul play of some sort. And Nehemiah's answer is worthy of mark. It is a great piece of wisdom, boys, to stick to your work and do it ; as a cannonier in a battle sticks to his gun, letting nothing distract him."

"I don't think I understand the letter he sent the fifth time," I said.

"Tricks again. He pretended that Nehemiah was in danger from false reports of his intended treachery ; and

proposed a seemingly friendly conference, as if to decide what measures had better be taken. But 'surely the net is spread in vain in the *sight* of any bird.' Nehemiah would not be caught so ; but let Sanballat know he saw through him."

"He was a good deal plagued by them all, I judge," said Dan. "He had to pray that his hands might be strengthened ; and that looks as if they felt weak."

"Then who was this Shemaiah, who is mentioned next ?" said I.

"Another of Nehemiah's enemies ; a false prophet, of whom we learn that there were already a number. This man was in the interest, perhaps in the pay, of Sanballat or Tobiah."

"I do not understand what his proposal amounts to," said Dan.

"It appears that he shut himself up in his house either feigning danger to himself as Nehemiah's friend, or symbolising it as threatening the Tirshatha ; according to the manner of the prophets in giving symbols as part of the message with which they were charged. The former, I think, is the most probable. So shutting himself up, he maybe sent for Nehemiah, and then proposed as a measure of safety that they should both take refuge in the Temple ; that is, in the Holy Place itself, where none but a priest might at any time go ; and shut the doors, and so be in security. The object was, to get a handle for an accusation against Nehemiah, if he could have been induced to do something illegal. Shemaiah gave this as a prophecy committed to him and therefore a message sent from God ; but again Nehemiah saw through the snare. It seems that there were, as I said, a number of false prophets doing their mischievous work among the people ; and this attempt is mentioned as one of their chief machinations against the good governor."

"How should Nehemiah, or how could any one, tell between the true prophets and the false ? I don't see."

"Think a minute. A message from God would be ~~seen~~

sistent with His word and His other messages by other of His prophets. The sayings of false prophets were contrary to both. So here. Shemaiah counselled what was forbidden. No man, not a priest, might go into the sanctuary. 'The stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death.' So Nehemiah answered, verse 11, rendered a little differently, — 'what man like me could go into the Holy Place and live?' or, if you like, 'what man like me could go into the Holy Place to save his life?'

"What a miserable set those Jews were, Uncle Sam!"

"Very much like the rest of the world, my boy."

"But it seems from the words at the end of the chapter, that there were many of the respectable men among them who were in correspondence with Tobiah."

"Yes, they were connected with him by marriage. The high priest himself was so connected with him; and long and lasting harm came of these alliances."

"Well, we have got the wall built," said Priscilla; "and the gates set up, I suppose. I think they were very quick about it. In the next chapter we read about the setting of guards for the gates."

"Read 1 Chron. ix. 17-27, and xxvi. 12-19. The porters, you see, had regularly in charge the keeping of the gates of the house of the Lord. Now Nehemiah gave them also, in connection with the singers and other Levites, the extra charge of the gates of the city; and over them in this charge he placed Hanani, his brother, and Hananiah, the governor of the citadel. He was a man whom Nehemiah could trust, and the charge was to the last degree important. The guards must take care that the gates be not opened 'until the sun be hot;' that is soon after its rising, in Eastern lands; and at evening they were to see the gates shut and barred before they left them; and from that hour through the night the people of the city were to keep a watch everywhere; each before his own house. Precautions very necessary. You know, the gates of Jerusalem are kept shut at night now, and it is very needful they should be. It was *if possible* more needful then. There was little strength

inside the city walls ; and this was what Nehemiah next took under consideration."

"Jerusalem does not seem to have been a favourite place of abode in those days. It is odd, when you think of the love some of the people had to it."

"You must recollect that until now it had been a place without walls ; therefore exposed to every enemy that might take it into his head to look for spoil there. The villages in the country were safer. Now Nehemiah saw his new walls and gates completed, and within them a great empty space. Scattering houses and groups of buildings, but also a deal of unused ground. It was the skeleton of a city. He formed a plan for bettering this state of things—the first preliminary step of which was a thorough reckoning of the people according to their genealogies. He found the lists of those who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel, which furnished him an excellent basis on which he could go to work. The lists follow here. Then in verse 73, the stop ought to be made after 'dwelt in their cities.' The next words properly begin the eighth chapter : 'When the seventh month came.'"

"That was Tisri. Of this same year ?"

"No doubt, of this same year. The walls were built and the gates set up, being finished the 25th of the month Elul, the sixth month. With the beginning of the seventh month came a great and general gathering of the people to Jerusalem. It was the Feast of Trumpets, and a special festival ; and it is supposed that in thankfulness for the accomplished building of the walls, the people desired the law to be read to them, that they might show their thankfulness by obedience to its demands."

"Where were the people ? Where was the water-gate ?"

"Cannot certainly tell now. Somewhere in an open space to the south-east of the Temple area. The Nethinims dwelt in Ophel ; so it must have been, one would say, the open space in the valley below, where there was room enough for the assembly. A pulpit of wood was erected, from which Ezra could be visible and his words better heard ; and

‘from the light till midday’ Ezra read the book of the law to the people ; men, women, and children old enough to understand.”

“Who were all these other people named, standing beside Ezra ?”

“Levites, part of whose special duty it was to instruct the people. This they did now, supplementing Ezra’s reading. Perhaps when the reading began they scattered themselves more or less among the crowd ; explaining and repeating and enlarging, so that all might hear and all might clearly understand. Perhaps, as some think, the people had very much forgotten their old language, and needed to have it translated into Chaldee ; one way or the other, or both, one can see that the services of the Levites were very necessary.”

“They were all honest and in earnest that day,” said I ; “for the reading troubled them. I suppose some of those chapters of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, which foreto’d what they had suffered, made an impression.”

“And other chapters which told them their duty ; duty which they knew none of them did, or thought of doing, according to the law. And so fear and trouble fell upon all the multitude.”

“Think of the people filling the valleys over there below Ophel !” said I. “And Ezra in his pulpit, and reading the book of Moses for six hours, straight ahead ; and all the people keeping still and listening and crying !”

“As soon as you feel that the words of the Bible are a personal matter, there is no difficulty in being interested,” said Uncle Sam.

“Uncle Sam, I *am* interested ; you know I am ; and yet I would not want to read it for six hours at once.”

“It all depends on how much you are interested. However, six hours of anything would be too much for you, Tiny. Those old Jews were made of stouter stuff.”

“How was that day ‘holy,’ as Nehemiah said it was ?”

“The feast of the new moon.”

"He told them 'the joy of the Lord was their strength.' I do not understand that," said Priscilla.

"Don't you know the strength there is in joy? and how your hands grow weak when your heart is faint?"

"Yes"—said Prissy doubtfully.

"Religion that has not got to the point of being joyful, is comparatively a weak thing, my child; and its possessor is but weak, and able for but a little in the service of the Lord. There is more power in a glad face than in twenty sermons."

"They went home at midday, I suppose, to prepare their dinners and eat them. And then the next day they gathered again to hear the reading. And then they found the order for the Feast of Tabernacles. Is it possible they had forgotten *that*?"

"It seems that after the seventy years in Babylon many things had fallen out of memory as well as out of use. And let a custom be discontinued for seventy years, you will find it not so easy to resuscitate it again."

"But it was in the Bible—in the book of the law, I mean."

"My dear, there are a great many things in the Bible, in the New Testament, which have been so long and so generally disregarded that people do not know they are there."

"Uncle Sam, that sounds very strange. What, for instance?"

"Study for yourself, and see. That is the best way."

"But, Uncle Sam, the returned people kept the Feast of Tabernacles soon after they came back from Babylon?"

"True, they kept the feast, then and other times; but without finding it necessary to make booths and live in them for a week. Some, no doubt, had done it, but not the whole people. Now it was done by the whole people. Everybody turned out to get olive and palm and myrtle and oleander branches; and booths were built all over Jerusalem and around it; Levites and priests making booths in the courts of the Temple; other people on the

flat roofs of their houses, and others in open places without the walls."

"Do the Jews keep this feast still?"

"In some parts they do; in Rome, for instance. The making of the booths is still attended to with scrupulous care; for they must not be too open or too close; thick enough to be shady, yet not so dense as to shut out the stars or a few drops of rain. And if weather permit, the greater part of the time during the seven days of the feast must be spent in the booths."

"They came together at *this* feast every day to read."

"So it must have been a good time."

"They cannot offer the sacrifices of the feast now?"

"No; only living in booths, and feasting, and reading the law, and processions and ceremonials with citrons and palm branches and branches of myrtle, and once with branches of willow. It is a shorn feast."

"How they must miss the sacrifices! That time, it is said, 'there was very great gladness.' And yet the next thing is the account of a general fast. I do not see what that was for."

"It follows naturally enough, my dear. After days spent in listening to the Word of God—or in studying it—the conclusion is apt to be a great and pressing sense of need, and conviction of sin, and a desire to regain and make sure of the Lord's favour. It is so with individuals now; it was so with the whole people then. So deeply they felt their sin and their need that they came, two days after the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles and the solemn assembly that followed it,—they came to another solemn assembly, clothed in sackcloth and with dust on their heads, and separating themselves from all strangers; that is, from all unlawful Gentile connections; they came to seek the Lord's forgiveness and favour."

"It is all very well to separate themselves from unlawful things," said Liph; "but what I do not like is this formality of mourning—sackcloth on their bodies and dust on their heads!"

"There was no formality about it ; there you fall into a mistake. Through reading of the book of the law during the seven days' feast, the people had become thoroughly aroused to a sense of their sin and of God's goodness and of their own and their children's danger ; they came together for no formality now, but for the most serious of earnest work. Dust on their heads and sackcloth on their persons were but another way, and very expressive, of saying to the Lord and to each other what they felt."

"But a man may put on sackcloth and ashes and feel nothing."

"In which case it means nothing. He had better go properly dressed."

"So I think," said Liph.

"But, my boy, when feeling is true and deep, it is according to human nature to express it in action as well as in speech. So flags waving, and guns firing, and garlands of flowers, and triumphal arches, and festal garments and the like, serve to give more vivid expression to rejoicing and gladness ; the converse is just as natural. In some states of mind a man goes alone and fasts, as surely as in another state of mind he calls his friends together and makes a feast. If either thing be not moved by feeling, it is to be sure a heartless formality ; but the feasting as well as the fasting."

"They were in earnest here sure enough," said Dan, "for they began with reading the Law for 'a fourth part of the day ;' that is three hours, I suppose. Fancy a congregation nowadays sitting three hours to read the Bible ! and then three hours of prayer !"

"A six hours' meeting"—added Uncle Sam.

"I don't see how they could do it," said Priscilla.

"They had so much to say. They had so much to do. For the people felt, my dear, that all was not right between them and their God ; and that unless it could be made right, the end would be destruction. Once make religion a matter of life and death,—and religious work becomes engaging."

"But what was the use of telling all this history over?"

"It formed the basis of their confession, don't you see? God had chosen, and delivered, and led, and fed, and guarded the people; their return had been to disobey, forsake, and forget the Lord. An ox knows his owner, but they had not known theirs."

We read the whole chapter, and very beautiful I thought it. I imagined the bowed heads and hearts of the people joining in that prayer.

"Who are the 'people of the lands,' verse 30, Uncle Sam?"

"The nations under whose dominion they had fallen, since they would not have the Lord for their King. Beginning with Assyria, which had carried away the northern tribes, then Babylonia, now the Persians."

"How sorrowful that 36th verse is! 'Behold, we are servants this day.' And the next verse—'They have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress.' And yet the Jews were not badly off under the Persians."

"Not specially; but all nations were badly off under them; taxed at will, and oppressed as the king's occasions prompted. The Jews had been a really free and a very proud people so long, that bondage and servitude was exceeding bitter to them, more than to others."

"So they made a covenant," said I. "Again! How many times had they made a covenant!"

"From the time of Joshua," said Liph.

"Joshua!—say Moses. First they made a covenant in Moses' time. Then under Joshua. Then,—who next, Uncle Sam?"

"Under Asa they did," said Dan; "and under Josiah they did; and Jehoiada the good priest and Hezekiah both made covenants with the people; and under Ezra they did. And what did it all amount to?"

"I don't see any use in making covenants at all," remarked Liph.

"Not unless you are going to keep them."

"Can't you keep them without making them?" said Liph, laughing.

"In that case you miss the other party to the covenant. Pledge yourself to the Lord, and the Lord declares Himself pledged to you."

"But, sir, if one does the things?"—said Liph.

"Those words remain, and they sound in my ears;—'Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I also confess'"—

"Well, let us see what they covenanted to do, this time," said Dan.

"Pretty comprehensive," said Uncle Sam. "The articles of the covenant are given in the following chapter. First, that they would walk in God's law."

"That includes everything, it seems to me."

"Nevertheless they instanced special things. They would not let their children intermarry with the heathen round about."

"That seems very narrow," said Liph.

"The neglect, or disobedience, of that law, however, had brought the people again and again into great trouble, by leading them away from God. You cannot change the fact, Liph; and the fact remains the same to this day."

"What fact do you mean, sir?"

"The same we have talked of before; connections formed with other people lead the Lord's people away from Him."

"They meant this one to be 'a sure covenant,'" I said, looking at the words.

"Ay, they meant it."

"Why *wasn't* it a sure covenant then? They signed and sealed, in the most careful manner."

"We come back to the old words, Tiny;—'The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.' The terrible world-power of which Babylon was only an outward symbol."

"And the names of the signers and sealers are given," Dan went on.

"Honoured names, for they made a brave stand. First

the governor's name. Then come twenty-one names of priests, the heads of houses. Next, heads of Levitical houses ; lastly, heads of the people."

"Forty-four names," said Dan.

"That means all. In the lists in Ezra ii., there are but thirty-three heads of houses or towns mentioned, and those names are not all here ; but some of those houses had multiplied and divided now, and we have the heads of the branches, along with some others who had come back later."

"But we didn't speak of all the things they covenanted for," I went on. "They promised not to let their children marry strangers"—

"Heathen."

"Yes, I mean heathen. Then they promised to keep the Sabbath-day. Why, had they been buying and selling on that day ?"

"Evidently ; or they would not have promised to stop doing it. They promised to keep the Sabbatical year, too."

"What was the use of that, Uncle Sam ?"

"It had many and sweet uses, my child, though it is no longer a thing ordered and binding upon us. Fancy it. They were not in old time a trading or travelling people ; their business was agriculture. Now fancy, that every seventh year labour was stopped. All hands were delivered from binding toil. There was a whole year of rest and leisure, in which higher things might be attended to and enjoyed. They missed nothing, for the harvests of the sixth year were abundant enough to cover all the wants of the seventh, and even to reach on into the eighth, till the new crops began to come in. All that seventh year would not be without fruit ; there would be a large up-springing of self-sown grain, and vineyards and olive orchards would bear as usual ; but no man should go to gather his grapes or shake down his olives or cut his corn. It was left for the poor, and *they* went in and gathered it. Think of the rest and peace of that seventh year, and the comfort which found *its* way into the houses that were wont to be very bare."

"O Uncle Sam ! that must have been beautiful !"

"It must have been a horrid bore, I should think," said Liph.

"It was an image, a further image, of the rest to come," said Uncle Sam ; "and of the satisfied peace that will settle down then upon all hearts, and the joy and rejoicing in God and in each other that will fill them."

"Sir," said Dan, "do you suppose this regulation was much kept ?"

"In the nation's history, do you mean ? I fear not. In the nature of things, it would be observed only when faith and obedience characterised the people and the government ; and how often was that ?"

"The last thing covenanted about is the money for keeping up the Temple services, and the tithes, and all the rest of it."

"How much is the third of a shekel ?"

"A shekel was a little over two shillings English ; but you must remember that does not tell the whole, for the value of a certain sum varies greatly with different times and circumstances. The original tax was a half shekel ; see *Exod. xxx. 13*."

"Then why didn't they make it a half shekel now ?"

"It is supposed, because of the poverty of the people. They were 'servants,' you know, under the Persian kings ; it was not like the old times of independence. That is one view ; and another is, that the Persian kings themselves furnished a certain contribution towards the service of the Temple."

"We never hear of the wood being arranged for until now," said Dan.

"Very necessary now. The furnishing of it was distributed among the people, by lot, so that each division might give in their quota at a certain specified time."

"It must have taken a great quantity, to keep the fire always burning on the great altar," said Dan ; "I never thought of that before. And in Palestine, where wood was so scarce—why, they must have fetched it from a great distance !"

"Little doubt but they did, in the times when the whole land was thickly settled and fully cultivated."

"I don't know much about the first-fruits," I went on.

"You know that no barley might be cut or harvested, until the first sheaf had been brought into the house of the Lord? That first sheaf was cut the 15th of Nisan, the first day of the Passover feast. In like manner, the first ripe fruits of all the harvests; all was acknowledged to be the Lord's, by giving the first and the best to Him. See Num. xviii. 12, 13."

"These fruits were to be stored in the chambers of the Temple; where were they?"

"There were rooms for various uses, built along the wall enclosing the inner court; but these 'chambers' for the first-fruits must have been spacious, and probably built in the outermost wall of enclosure, or connected with it. They held the stores for the priests' use, delivered in by the people, from all quarters and of all kinds."

"And they had left off bringing in these first-fruits?"

"And the first-born of cattle; and the redemption tax for the first-born of their children. All the service of God, in short, except the formalities which cost nothing."

"The daily sacrifices cost something, sir."

"Not much. Not a tenth of everything everybody had."

"It seems to me a tenth was a great deal to give," Liph went on. "A hundred dollars out of every thousand!"

"More is demanded of us now."

"More, sir? Few people pay a tenth."

"I spoke of what is required, not of what is paid."

"What is required now, sir?"

"O Liph!" I cried, "don't you know? Our bodies, 'a living sacrifice.'"

"I am talking of money and the like," said Liph scornfully.

"I should like to know what else you have kept, when you have given your body a living sacrifice," returned my uncle. "You are certainly not taking in the sense of the words. Suppose your hands the Lord's; His servants, to

do His work wholly. Your feet the Lord's; taking you nowhere but where the servant of the Lord ought to go and where you can be doing your Master's work. Your lips will speak nothing but what suits and belongs to His service; your ears will not listen to what is foolish or wrong; your eyes will not look at evil, whether in the world or in a book. When you have given all that, what is left, my boy?"

"That is slavery," said Liph.

"It is the only liberty. 'Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin;' but 'if the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.'"

"These old people only gave tenths anyhow," said Liph, quitting the question.

"Really, much more. Free-will offerings there were, and sin offerings; the legal tenth does not by any means include all that was given. The people were in great earnest. And so the next measure shows. Here comes in Nehemiah's plan for building up Jerusalem, not with brick and mortar but men. The first verse of chapter xi. says that 'the rulers dwelt at Jerusalem;' but it was sadly deficient, we know, in other population. It was therefore proposed and agreed, that of the rest of the people one tenth should be drafted off to take up their dwelling in the city; and *who* that tenth should be was determined by lot."

"Throw up for it!" cried Liph.

"Not as you do the same thing. The appeal to the lot was reckoned a direct appeal to God. It was asking and receiving a decision from Him. See the latter part of the first chapter of Acts, where the disciples sought to fill up the gap in the number of the twelve which had been made by Judas' treachery."

"Then why could one not cast lots so nowadays?" Dan asked.

"One could, if one did it so; with full recognition of God's hand, and full readiness to abide by His decisions."

"It was pretty good of the people to be willing to be cast lots for in this way," said I; "for I suppose they did not want to go to live at Jerusalem."

CHAPTER XV.

NEHEMIAH'S REFORMS.

"Now comes another list of names," said Dan. "What are all these lists?"

"This one is a list of the inhabitants of the province; for Judæa was a 'province' now. First come two chiefs of the tribe of Judah, Athaiah, and Maaseiah. Under them were heads of households, four hundred and sixty-eight. Then come two chiefs of Benjamin also, and under them nine hundred and twenty-eight heads of households. Priests of different orders follow, with eleven hundred and ninety-two families. Levites, two hundred and eighty-four; some of them attending to the outer business of the Temple, some serving in the sacrificial work, some doing the singing. Verse 17 gives the names of three who respectively were over the three bands of the musicians. The gatekeepers follow. All this has a certain interest for us. Verse 21 repeats that Ophel was the place inhabited by the Nethinim."

"What king is this mentioned in verse 23?"

"Artaxerxes. See his grant and commission to Ezra in Ezra, chap. vii."

"Then, what is this Pethathiah, in verse 24?"

"He was a Jew, residing at court, attending there to the Jews' business."

"Then come more lists in chap. xii. I do not make anything of all these names."

"No, but so much as this you can understand. In David's time, you know, the priests were divided into twenty-four courses, for the service of the Temple; it being impossible that they should all be on duty at once. Now under Zerubabel there returned to Jerusalem, of the priests, members

of four courses, or perhaps rather of four races. These were arranged in twenty-two houses or courses under Zerubabel; and we find here only twenty-one of them."

"What became of the twenty-second?"

"It is possibly only a scribe's error—a name left out; so Keil supposes."

"Did they divide again, so as to make up the old number of twenty-four courses?"

"I do not know. I do not know that the old number was ever made up. I think it is probable; if a statement of Josephus may be believed."

"The next thing is the dedication of the wall."

"This was a service of joy and thanksgiving; and very solemn and imposing I imagine it to have been. All the singers were called in from the villages in the country, where some of them had established themselves, that the whole band might be there 'to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps.' Nehemiah divided them into two companies, and setting out from the valley gate, that is the Jaffa gate or near it, they made the circuit of the city, one company going one way and the other in the direction opposite, till they met on the other side of the city. So two processions at the same time passed round the walls, upon the top of them; each procession being formed of singers, nobles, and priests. No doubt they wore the white robes which were the festive dress of the Jews; no doubt they were stately and noble figures; and as the shine of their robes and the glitter of the instruments and the swell of the music passed along and encircled the city, it must have been a grand ceremonial. First, in each procession went a band of musicians with their instruments. Then followed a small company of the princes, the noblest and most dignified in the nation, Nehemiah heading one company and Ezra the other. After the princes came priests bearing trumpets; not a crowd of them, but apparently seven, as seven are named in verse 41. And the bursts of melody and harmony as they went, and the sound of the

trumpets and the clash of the cymbals, must have been wonderfully beautiful and expressive, as the two processions wound their way slowly along the walls."

"One went north and one went south?"

"From the valley gate, yes. One procession went round Zion, past the Fountain of Siloam, either over or around Ophel; till they came to the open space south-eastward of the Temple area. The other procession went round by the tower of the furnaces and the 'broad wall,' past the gate of Ephraim and the fish gate and the tower of Hananeel, and so down to the Temple area and the gate called the prison gate. The court of the prison, you remember, was in the enclosure of the king's house, therefore on Zion; and the gate in question is supposed to have got its name from its opening upon a street which led across the Ophel ridge to the court of the prison. This must have been not far from the water gate at which the first company's progress stopped; and the two processions joined in the court of the Temple in making all the melody they could. 'They sang loud,' the word says; and 'the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.'"

"Sacrifices were offered too."

"Certainly. Those were thank offerings and peace offerings, on parts of which the worshippers feasted with their families. Yes, there was very great joy in Jerusalem that day."

"Before all this, in verse 30, it says the Levites purified themselves and the people, *and the wall*. How?"

"I suppose, by special sin offerings. You remember Hezekiah did the like, after the cleansing of the Temple; 2 Chron. xxix. 20-24."

"That must have been a beautiful day," said I. "Uncle Sam, one would think the people would always have been good after that."

"It took the force of a good and determined ruler to keep them good, Tiny; and that cannot be said to be a very sound condition. See how they did when Nehemiah was away. In Artaxerxes' thirty-second year he was obliged

for some reason to go back to court and remain there awhile. In his absence, the high priest went so far as to have one of the store chambers of the Temple arranged for the accommodation of his connection Tobiah ; the enemy of Nehemiah and enemy of the Jews. Corn and wine and oil and vessels belonging to the priests and Levites, or to the service of the Temple, were cleared away, and 'a great chamber' put in order for the reception of that worse than heathen. In fact, the tithes ceased to be given to the Levites, which the people had so solemnly covenanted to pay ; of course the Levites, singers and all, went to their fields in the country ; for they could neither serve nor sing unless they could be fed. Of course the service of the house of God languished. They had covenanted to keep the Sabbath ; but the temptations of ease and gain were too strong ; and again buying and selling went on, and the country people brought their wares into the city and found a good market for their fruit and wine ; and Tyrians brought fish and other things ; the Sabbath was generally and greatly desecrated. The people had covenanted to have no alliances with the heathen ; but Nehemiah when he came back found Jews that had married women of Ashdod and women of Moab and women of Ammon ; and this had been going on some time, for they had children, and the children did not speak their father's tongue, but a mixed dialect of the tongues of the heathen."

"But how long was Nehemiah away?"

"We do not know. He was twelve years in Jerusalem ; then was forced to return to court, and to his post, for all that appears. After a time, not specified, he obtained leave to visit Jerusalem again."

"Then his heart must have almost failed him, I should think. What was the use of trying to do anything with such a people?"

"If his heart failed him, which we are not told, at least his hand did not. He set about reforming abuses as diligently as ever. Indignantly he had the furniture and goods of Tobiah cast out of the rooms which had been given

up to him, and caused the rooms to be cleansed and restored to their proper use. The corn and wine and oil and frankincense were brought back ; the 'great chamber' was probably a number of chambers ; and in the course of doing this Nehemiah found that the quantities of these things were not what they should be ; and he saw that the musicians and Levites who should have been in attendance were gone, gone to their country homes, to provide for themselves and their families, by their own labour in the fields. So then he 'contended with the rulers ;' reprov'd and argued with them, asking, 'Why is the house of God forsaken ?'

"Uncle Sam," said I, "that is like things nowadays."

"As how, Tiny ?"

"Why you were saying only yesterday, that there are a great many men that would come out and be missionaries, only there is not money to send them. So they have to go to work of some other sort, like these Levites."

"And there is no Nehemiah that could set things straight now. You see he was able to do it then ; he collected the singers and other Levites back to their service, and the people again brought in the tithes and first-fruits. But I fancy that second coming to Jerusalem must have filled the good man with grief ; indeed we are told as much. The next thing he tells us he took hold of was the desecration of the Sabbath day. Here again he had to 'contend' with the rulers and nobles. Then, as now, there were people enough to argue for the loose holding of the law."

"Nehemiah took it up with a high hand," said Liph. "Shut the gates. I don't see what right he had."

"The right of the Tirshatha. Every government has the right to forbid that the law of God be publicly broken."

"People have a right to think as they like, sir."

"No ; you do not state the thing justly. There can be in the nature of things no *right* to do wrong. The utmost you can say is, that people have a right to form their own opinions and to act in accordance with them, provided they *do not interfere* with other people."

"Well, sir, that is what I said, isn't it?"

"You said that people might think 'as they liked.' Now liking ought to have nothing to do with it. People ought to think *truth*, according to the best evidence they can get ; and to neglect no means of getting at it."

"Nehemiah was a grand man," said Dan. "He put everything in order, and cared for nobody and nothing but the truth and his duty. But he was pretty rough with the men who had married strange wives! Struck them and pulled off their hair!"—

"And cursed them!" said Priscilla.

"Not speaking lightly or profanely, but with judicial severity. The Tirshatha was certainly greatly excited. But you may see why, in his arguments used with these men. He reminds them how disastrous such connections had proved even to Solomon, the son of David, the wise, the beloved of his God. Even he had been drawn aside into dreadful and fatal evil doing by his love for heathen women ; was it likely that these ordinary men could go into the same snare and escape scathless? Yet it does not appear that Nehemiah broke up the existing marriages in these cases ; only he demanded that no more such should be formed. He saw ruin that way. He was quite justified."

"What did he do to this son of Joiada?"

"That case was different. Such connections could not be allowed for a moment among the priests, who were bound to be apart from all defilement. This son of the high priest had married a daughter of Sanballat, and so Nehemiah banished him from his office and his country. The man, to whom Josephus gives the name of Manasseh, withdrew to Samaria, to his father-in-law, who was satrap of the country ; and together they wrought mischief against the Jews by establishing a rival temple on Mount Gerizim. Josephus says further that a number of other priests joined him. This was extremely hateful to the Jews, who abhorred still more, if possible, from that time all contact or connection with the Samaritans. And the Samaritans annoyed the Jews ; lighted fires on the hills on wrong evenings, to

mislead the people in the celebration of the new moon festival. Those hill fires were intended to let the people of the nation ever so far scattered know and keep the festival at the right time with their brethren in Judea. From beacon to beacon, from hill to hill, a very little time carried the warning to Mesopotamia, and so to Babylon. The Samaritans broke this up by their false fires, and obliged the Jews to depend on messengers instead. Further, they would not harbour people travelling to Jerusalem ; they would even interfere with them and do them damage ; so that the longer way on the other side of Jordan had to be resorted to. They maintained that their temple on Gerizim was superior to the Temple at Jerusalem ; and once, it is said, certain Samaritans got access to the court of the Temple at Jerusalem and strewed human bones over it, to defile it."

"There are some of those people left still, sir, are there not ?"

"Of the Samaritans ? A few ; not two hundred."

"They believe in the Bible, don't they ?"

"Only in the books of Moses."

"It is a strange story !" said Dan. "However, the hatred of the Jews is fully accounted for."

"Uncle Sam, what became of Nehemiah ?"

"We do not know. Most likely he went back finally to his king at the court of Persia and died there. But we are not told, on any trustworthy authority. His life, we have ; not his death ; and that is of little importance."

"But, Uncle Sam, the Bible says, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.'"

"Most true, Tiny !" said Uncle Sam tenderly. "I do not doubt that. But what is precious to the Lord is not always published by the voice of men. Some time I hope to hear Nehemiah himself tell about it."

"Uncle Sam, we have got only to the silver, in Nebuchadnezzar's image of the world kingdoms ; the silver breast and arms ; I should like to hear about the brass and the iron."

"That would take us down through all the history of the *ages, Tiny*, from then till now ; and the history is not done

yet. That 'little horn,' which Daniel saw, which came up among the ten horns, in his vision of the fourth beast ; that is to make war with the saints and prevail against them, before the time comes that the saints will possess the kingdom."

"That is the fourth beast," said Dan. "You know about the second and third ?"

"The second was the Persian. The third was the Grecian, which under Alexander made such sudden end of the unwieldy Persian power. That was only a little more than a hundred years after Nehemiah."

"And what was the fourth beast doing then ?"

"Growing."

"Growing strong, too."

"Yes, in some of the first glory of its young strength. But it was a republic ; a form of power at that time unknown to Daniel, so the beast is not described. All the more terrible for that."

"Sir," remarked Liph, "surely a republic is not a terrible thing."

"No," said Uncle Sam slowly, "not that exactly. A republic is an organised and orderly form of what in its irregular and disorderly manifestation is infinitely terrible,—popular power, mob power. The will of that wild beast, an ignorant and lawless multitude, may well be called terrible."

"But, Uncle Sam, the Roman power was soon a monarchy—not that exactly, but an empire ; and had emperors."

"The emperors, however, represented themselves as just the servants of the people. It was not the emperor, but *Rome* that any offender was held to have offended. That was a fiction, of course, but a fiction which they found it needful to make use of."

"A little more than a hundred years after Nehemiah the silver kingdom was destroyed. Then how long before the iron monster ?"

"Less than a hundred years after the division of Alexander's kingdom, Rome became mistress of the whole of Italy. She was moving on fast. Then came the Punic

Wars, and Carthage was destroyed. Greece became a Roman province; bit by bit they pushed on into Asia Minor, making it their own. Meanwhile Judæa had had a breathing time of independence under the Maccabees, hard fought for, and but a little while enjoyed. The Jewish leaders disputed among themselves, and finally called in the Roman general Pompey. Pompey came with his good offices, but not rendered for nothing. Syria and Judæa became provinces of the great empire which was swallowing up the world."

"That was?"—

"B.C. 63. Then, 'in the days of these kings,' 'the stone was cut out without hands,' which was to break in pieces and subdue all these kingdoms; the Rock of Israel; the Stone of the foundation. Four years before our era, in an obscure little village, a child was born; little thought of by Rome or her philosophers; and a few years later, Rome put Him to death. Nevertheless, 'the government shall be upon His shoulder'—*is* upon His shoulder. He is only, like the nobleman in the parable, 'gone into a far country, to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return.'"

"Now, Uncle Sam," said Dan, "I should like to know how much the Jews knew and expected about Him during all those years. Nehemiah flourished about 445 B.C. Through those four hundred and forty-five years, what did the Jews look for?"

"We can easily see what they ought to have looked for. But the colours of the dawning eastern sky are not seen by a person who keeps his face persistently turned to the west. However, there were some who read and hoped truly, albeit vaguely; and there was a wide-spread and strong anticipation which met disappointment. The people expected their Messiah; there is no doubt of that. Let us see what they had a right to expect. Turn to Isaiah ix. 6, 7."

"Here is the promise of a human child who should be born and who should be their King," said Liph.

"A very strange *human* child!" said Dan. "His name was 'the mighty God.'"

"*But a child, to be born,*" said Liph.

"Just Emmanuel," said Uncle Sam. "God with us. The Word made flesh."

"But could they understand that?"

"I don't know whether any one of old ever understood it, except Abraham and Moses. Those two did; and I sometimes think, Adam, to judge by the remnants of truth handed down in tradition by his children. But we cannot go into that subject now. Read the 11th of Isaiah."

"This promises a beautiful time of peace, Uncle Sam," I said. "A good King, and an end of wickedness and trouble."

"They expected that," said my uncle.

"But the Messiah did not bring it," said Liph.

"He made preparations for it. It is coming. Isaiah was not told *when* it would come; and naturally, the Jews looked to see their Messiah establish it immediately on His own manifestation. Read chap. xxxii. 1-3, and xxxiii. 20-24."

"How they must have longed for it!" said I.

"Humph!" said my uncle. "The words stand; but few people are longing for the time to come. No, Tiny; the Jews were not so unlike the rest of the world, after all. Read the 35th chapter. And then see in the 40th how the prophet broke out in a new strain. There should be heard a voice in the wilderness, bidding men prepare for the Lord's coming."

"The *Lord's* coming; it is plain enough here," I said.

"And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed," he said, "Uncle Sam went on. 'So the Jews expected it.'"

"So it was, Uncle Sam."

"So it was to a few, my dear; 'We beheld His glory,' the apostle John said; but 'all flesh' did not see it together. That waits."

"Till He comes next time?"

"Yes."

"Then which coming does Isaiah speak of here? for John the Baptist came that first time."

"Isaiah speaks of both comings, seeing them in the far

future as essentially one and foretelling the fruits of them. Also it appears that Elijah the prophet will appear before the next coming and will preach preparation for it. Read verses 9-11. You see, *that* refers to the next time. Compare Rev. xxii. 12."

"The old Jews could not possibly imagine all this."

"Not possibly."

"Then how were they to blame, sir, for not finding it out when Christ came?"

"Some did find it out. Andrew and Simon; John and James; the woman at the well of Samaria, and others. What was the difference between them and others?"

"I do not know, sir?"

"You may find it in the fifth chapter of Matthew, the third verse. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' As soon as a man is in that condition, he wants a Saviour from sin; then he is looking in the direction to find Him. And as sure as any man comes to be 'willing to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.' Now read seven verses of the 42nd chapter."

"Here is the promise for the Gentiles."

"Now turn to Jeremiah xxiii. 5-8; xxxiii. 15-17. Then Micah said that Messiah would be born in Bethlehem; Micah v. 2; and Daniel said He would come seventy, or rather sixty-nine weeks of years from the restoration or the decree to restore Jerusalem. Dan. ix. 24-26. Joel promised that Messiah would come to judge the heathen and to give His own people peace. Joel iii. 11-21."

"So the Jews expected that?" said Liph.

"They were right in expecting it. But they mistook the rendering of 'His people' and the 'heathen;' for the fact is, that 'They which be of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.' Read Micah iv. 1-8; there you have what formed the burden of Jewish hopes. 'The law shall go forth of Zion;' 'the kingdom shall come to Jerusalem.' Finally Malachi declared that the Lord would come to His Temple, which you know the Shekinah had forsaken; and that His messenger would prepare the way."

"When did Malachi prophesy?"

"Probably about Nehemiah's time. He rebukes the same sins which gave the governor so much trouble ; and he does not speak of the building of the Temple ; so he was most likely a cotemporary of Nehemiah. Read Mal. iii. 1-4, and iv."

"And from that time they counted the weeks of years, and waited ?"

"And suffered enough to make the waiting eager."

"Four hundred and fifty years !" said I.

"And since then, near two thousand years," added Uncle Sam. "And we are waiting yet. But yet 'the Lord is not slack concerning His promise.'"

"Uncle Sam, I am very sorry for the Jews."

"So am I, Tiny. I am yet more sorry for those to whom light has come, and who nevertheless prefer darkness."

"Sir," said Liph, "why do you suppose they do not see the light now ?"

"A veil is on their heart."

"But they might see for themselves, one would think, what a mistake they have made."

"You do not notice the words. The veil is on their *heart* ; what is the use of intellectual vision to men who are not willing to let the light in ?"

"Who wrote the book of Ezra, sir ?"

"Ezra himself, undoubtedly."

"And Nehemiah the book of Nehemiah ?"

"Yes."

"Who wrote the books of the Kings ?"

"Somebody who lived in the latter part of the seventy years in Babylon. They were compiled from a former work put together before the Captivity, by some prophet, giving the annals of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah ; the course of events, bits of prophecy, accounts of individuals. The books of Kings and Chronicles, as we have them, were both drawn from this common source."

"By different writers ?"

"Certainly. The Chronicles were written later, as late as the time of Ezra."

"It seems to me they just go over the same ground."

"In part. Only in part. Each work contains many things not included in the other. In general, both works are drawn from the same sources ; from those books of the annals of the two kingdoms, together with writings of the prophets, which lay before the several compilers. But the books of Chronicles were written after the return from the Captivity ; and the author confined himself mainly to the fortunes of the kingdom of Judah ; and in his relations had a special regard to the religious bearing of the history. The author of the books of Kings puts the facts together. The author of the books of Chronicles puts together some of the same facts, bringing in others, all to show the history of the people as the covenant people, and how their fortunes rose and fell according as they kept or broke the covenant."

"Ah !" said Dan. "I am glad to understand that. And are the Jews expecting the Messiah still ?"

"I do not know. At the paschal supper they set an extra glass of wine on the table for the prophet Elijah, who, Malachi says, will come before the Great Day, and whom they somehow expect to appear on this occasion ; but I do not know, children. In their hearts, the wise ones must be conscious that the seventy weeks are long past. The day is yet to come, but it will come, when they will open their eyes to see the truth. A very bitter awakening it will be, as the prophet Zechariah depicts it ; but 'so, all Israel shall be saved.' 'These which be the natural branches, shall be grafted into their own olive-tree.' The Lord shall be King of all the earth."

"Will it be still then Jews and Gentiles, the division ; as it has been and is now ?"

"Nay. In Christ that division is done away. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek,' but 'all one in Christ Jesus.'"

"I wish it would come, Uncle Sam."

"Ay, Tiny ! so do I."

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